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INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

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# Newtown faces Christmas in a painful season

**CHRISTOPHER SULLIVAN**

**Associated Press**

**NEWTOWN, Connecticut**

**(AP)** — Bells and lights and gifts: These have always shown us it's Christmastime.

But this year, in this town, the bells toll in mourning. The brightest lights glare from TV satellite trucks. And gifts? Some around town suggest that presents and other rituals really ought to be put off in this joyless season. Could anyone imagine celebrating Christmas under the pall that has spread here since the horror at Sandy Hook Elementary School?

The answer, somehow, is yes. The spirit of Christmas has pushed through, even here, where people are seeing lights and hearing bells in ways they never had before, and reminding themselves which gifts are truly most precious.

The outpouring of caring that followed the tragedy has been an especially treasured gift. The weekly Newtown Bee's special edition on the shootings

gave two full pages to sympathetic, prayerful notes from across the U.S., from Britain, South Africa and many other places, includ-

last year.

From Alberta, Canada, truck driver David Lenzi wrote of pulling off the road, overcome, when he



**A woman with flowers walks past a Christmas tree which has become a memorial to the Newtown shooting victims in Newtown, Conn. In the wake of the shooting, the grieving town is trying to find meaning in Christmas.**

**(AP Photo/Seth Wenig)**

ing Norway, which lost 77 innocents in a massacre

heard of the tragedy. He sent condolences to the

town, and added: "I have heard media reports of people taking down Christmas decorations. I request that this stop happening." Instead, he suggested, let Christmas be a celebration of the lives lost and "a beginning of ... healing."

Right after the shootings, many did choose to turn off lighting displays that had glowed with holiday joy in their yards since early December.

The row of lit-up candy canes and strings of icicle lights at Jose Marin's house went dark, and the reindeer, snowman and circus train remained unlit for five days after the tragedy, which hit close to home. One of the children who died was on the same swim team as his daughter.

But words he heard at St. Rose of Lima Church helped convince Marin to turn the lights back on. "The priest said it was not fair to the other kids," he said.

And then his niece begged to see the twinkling display. She's just 3, too young, of course, to understand how horror could intrude on the holiday.

The lights became a theme for clergy; they spoke of light in darkness, noting the guiding star at the center of the Christmas story and the candles at the heart of the Jewish holiday Hanukkah.

Banks of candles glowed in each of the dozens of impromptu shrines around town, their light falling on teddy bears and other toys, symbolic gifts for the lost children, and on uncounted notes.

Yet if the tragedy's intrusion cannot be denied here, neither can Christmas.

Mike Zilinek, a 72-year-old retired deputy fire marshal

who has lived in Newtown since 1946, choked up acknowledging the grief that "still comes in waves." Nonetheless, he can't wait for his sons and their families to arrive for Christmas.

"We're not giving up," he said. "We have to continue on."

There'll be 12 around his table, and thoughts about many more: "We'll have a prayer and a moment of silence."

"We can't lose Christmas too," said Lisa Terifay, who has two children at Sandy Hook Elementary who survived. Her son is in first grade. "The class he sat next to at lunch," she said through tears, "they're all gone."

How to grieve and still carry on?

"You feel so torn because you don't want to move on in your life and leave others behind," Terifay said. "We're not ever going to leave any of those families behind. They're our families forever."

Chrissy Hadgraft is also torn. Her son, who is in the U.S. Air Force in Germany, is coming home for Christmas to mourn and help his town heal.

"I'm so happy to be seeing him but I feel so guilty because he gets to come home, and there's 20 houses, their kids aren't coming home, or their mother or the girlfriend or their sister," she said sobbing.

This year, she said, it was an effort just to pick up some gifts to stuff Christmas stockings, but "you really need to push forward and go on."

And many say the stocking stuffers or other purchased things are not the real gifts anyway.

**Continued on Page 3**

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# NEW ARRIVALS

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## New Town

Continued on Page 3

Donations, of course, are everywhere: bottled water dropped off at a firehouse ... pies baked with love ... songs sung by a gospel choir that came from Alabama.

At the Newtown General Store, owner Peter Leone acknowledged that "in many people's minds Christmas is not going to happen this year."

And yet as gifts of every kind have flowed in — among them cupcakes sent from Beverly Hills and a jeweler's pendants for victims' families — people feel hints of the normal Christmas spirit. "It kind of pulls back that feeling of anguish."

Intangible gifts help in even deeper ways.

A group called Pets on Wheels left Maryland at 3 a.m. Friday to reach Newtown in time to bring their therapy dogs for the ringing of church bells exactly one week after the shootings. Standing in a cold rain just after the ceremony at town hall, holding the leash of Hero, a German Shepherd mix who was getting and giving lots of attention, volunteer Jennifer Devorak said maybe the dogs' presence could offer "one mo-

ment of quiet" for those still hurting deeply.

"The gift is unconditional love," she said. "We like to call it 'licking loneliness.'"

Others saw an immeasurable gift to the surviving schoolchildren and their families in the painstaking recreation of the Sandy

Hook school at a previously closed school in the neighboring town of Monroe.

Hundreds of people were involved in the replication effort. Photographs of the old classrooms were used to determine wall paint colors, placement of bookshelves and cubby holes,

and the configuration of desks for reassembly as exactly as possible to how they were before.

If a box of crayons was left on a desk, it should be there when the students enter the new classrooms in January after the holiday break, Monroe First Select-

man Stephen Vavrek said. "A miracle," he called the effort.

And a gift: Not of toys, but of comfort, surely.

While many holiday events were scaled back or called off, others went forward, if only because Christmas is for children. □



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Alex Creamer, 9, receives a toy from Michael Sciaraffo, as Santa Claus, in the Belle Harbor neighborhood of the Queens borough of New York. Using Facebook, Sciaraffo started a charitable enterprise to collect and personally deliver toys to children affected by Superstorm Sandy, dressed as Santa Claus.

(AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

## Connecticut town welcomes Sandy refugees

JOHN PIRRO

© 2012 Danbury News-Times

**NEW MILFORD, Conn.** — For nearly two months, they've been living in shelters, sleeping with their few remaining possessions and pondering an uncertain future.

But on Sunday, the first contingent of families driven from Staten Island, N.Y., by Hurricane Sandy moved into new, temporary homes adjacent to Faith Church, and were welcomed by church members to the community where most are expected to spend the next year.

"It gives new meaning to the words 'Merry Christmas,'" said Michael Romano, looking around the trailer where he and his family will be living.

Fifteen of the 14x48-foot mobile homes have been installed so far, and 10 more will soon be set up on a four-acre parcel north of

the church, thanks to the combined efforts of the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation, the church, dozens of area businesses and many individual donations.

From furniture to kitchen items to bedding, "Everything you need is in these homes," said New Fairfield First Selectman John Hodge, a church member, operations director for the foundation and a driving force behind the project.

The donations also included Christmas gifts for the children who will be living there and attending the church school.

"Welcome home, at least for the next year," said Senior Pastor Frank Santora as he introduced the families to the congregation following Sunday's church service.

Romano, his wife Lynn, and their two sons, 21-month-old Lorenzo and 9-month-old

Alessandro, had been living in a shelter near Kennedy Airport since they were forced from their home, about five blocks from the beach, by the Oct. 29 storm.

"We tried to go back the next day, but we couldn't. It was like a war zone," Romano said, a Gulf War veteran. His wife lost her job when the nonprofit she worked for was washed away by the flood, and he will be looking for a job, he said.

Life in the shelter has been difficult, he said, and he feared for his family's safety. "There's been a lot of crime.

There was a rape and a stabbing, and the bodega across the street was robbed twice," he said.

The Tower to Tunnel Foundation, established in honor of Hodge's cousin, a New York City firefighter killed on 9/11, is providing funding

for the nearly \$1 million project, including buying the two-bedroom trailers from a company in Virginia.

But the effort wouldn't be possible without donations of material, labor and professional expertise by dozens of area companies and businesses, and contributions of everything from cleaning supplies to tableware by individuals, he and Santora said.

At one point Saturday, the lobby of the massive, Route 7 megachurch was filled with furniture and other items before they were moved into the trailers by volunteers.

Santora praised the cooperation of New Milford officials, including Mayor Pat Murphy, in making the project come to fruition so rapidly.

"Welcome, and thank you for the opportunity to show how great New Milford is," Murphy said. □

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# U.S. Senators point fingers over 'fiscal cliff' debacle

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senators bickered Sunday over who's to blame for lurching the country toward a year-end "fiscal cliff," bemoaning the lack of a deal days before the deadline but bridging no differences in the debate.

With the collapse Thursday of House Speaker John Boehner's plan to allow tax rates to rise on million-dollar-plus incomes, Sen. Joe Lieberman said "it's the first time that I feel it's more likely we'll go over the cliff than not," meaning that higher taxes for most Americans and painful federal agency budget cuts would be in line to go ahead.

"If we allow that to happen it will be the most colossal consequential act of congressional irresponsibility in a long time, maybe ever in American history because of the impact it'll have on almost every American," said Lieberman, a Connecticut independent.

If President Barack Obama and Congress can't reach a deal by Dec. 31, the so-called "fiscal cliff" looms. Some \$536 billion in tax increases, touching nearly all Americans would begin to take effect in January, because various federal tax cuts and breaks expire at year's end. Also, about \$110 billion in spending cuts divided equally between the military and most other federal departments would be automatically triggered. The fear is that the combination of tax increases and spending cuts would push the fragile U.S. economy back into recession.

Wyoming Sen. Jon Barrasso, a member of the Republican leadership, predicted that the new year would come without an agreement, and he faulted the White House.

"I believe the president is eager to go over the cliff for political purposes. He senses a victory at the bottom of the cliff," he said.

Democratic Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, was incredulous at Barrasso's assertion that "there is only one person that can provide



**House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., speaks at a news conference about the fiscal cliff negotiations at the Capitol in Washington. Hopes for avoiding the "fiscal cliff" that threatens the U.S. economy have dimmed since fighting among congressional Republicans cast doubt on whether any deal reached with President Barack Obama could win approval ahead of automatic tax increases and deep spending cuts kick in Jan. 1. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)**

the leadership" on such a matter vital to the nation's interests.

"There are 535 of us that can provide leadership. There are 435 in the House, 100 in the Senate and there is the president, all of us have a responsibility here," he said. "And, you know what is happening? What is happening is the same old tired blame game. He said/she said. I think the American people are tired of it. What they want to hear is what is the solution?"

No solution seemed any nearer, with Obama and Congress on a short holiday break.

"It is time to get back to the table," said Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. "And I hope if anyone sees these representatives from the House in line shopping or getting their Christmas turkey, they wish them a merry Christmas, they're civil, and then say go back to the table, not your own table, the table in Washington."

Predicted Lieberman: "We're going to spend New Year's Eve here I believe."

Obama already has scaled back his ambitions for a sweeping budget bargain. Before leaving the capital on Friday, he called for a

limited measure that extends George W. Bush-era tax cuts for most people and staves off federal spending cuts. The president also urged Congress to extend jobless benefits for the long-term unemployed that would otherwise be cut off for 2 million people at the end of the year.

"The truth of the matter is, if we do fall off the cliff after the president is inaugurated, he'll come back, propose just what he proposed ... in leaving Washington and we'll end up adopting it, but why should we put the markets in such turmoil and the people misunderstanding or lack of confidence," said Sen. Johnny Isakson, a Georgia Republican. □

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# Mom: US teen didn't seriously plan violence

**BARTLESVILLE, Oklahoma (AP)** — An Oklahoma teen accused of plotting to attack his high school showed symptoms of possible mental illness and had been seeing a therapist, but did not seriously plan violence, his mother said.

Jessie Chavez told the Tulsa World that her 18-year-old son, Sammie Eaglebear Chavez, sent her a text message two days before his Dec. 14 arrest saying he wanted to "shoot up" Bartlesville High School because he thought students were talking about him be-

hind his back.

She said she showed the message to their therapists but had not decided whether to take further action by the time of her son's arrest. "Deep down, I don't think my son would have done this," she told the newspaper. "That's not my son. My son laughs and makes jokes. He's always pulling pranks."

Sammie Chavez's arrest came hours before 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 children and six adults at a Connecticut elementary school. Lanza

also killed his mother and himself.

Sammie Chavez was being held on \$1 million bond Sunday in the Washington County Jail on a charge of conspiring to cause serious bodily harm or death to other students.

An officer with the Washington County Sheriff's Office told The Associated Press he didn't know whether Sammie Chavez, who is due in court Jan. 11, has a lawyer.

Jessie Chavez told the Tulsa World her son called her from the jail after hearing



Sammie Eaglebear Chavez is being held in the Washington County Correctional Center on \$1 million bail.

(AP Photo)

*Official:*

## Navy SEAL died of apparent suicide

**KIMBERLY DOZIER**

**AP Intelligence Writer**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — U.S. military officials are investigating the apparent suicide of a Navy SEAL commander in Afghanistan.

Navy SEAL Cdr. Job W. Price, 42, of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, died Saturday of a non-combat-related injury while supporting stability operations in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.

A U.S. military official said the death "appears to be the result of suicide." The



U.S. military officials are investigating the apparent suicide of Navy SEAL Cdr. Job W. Price, 42, of Pottstown, Pa., who died Saturday in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.  
 (AP Photo/U.S. Navy)

official spoke on condition of anonymity because the death is still being investigated.

"The Naval Special Warfare family is deeply saddened by the loss of our teammate," said Capt. Robert Smith, Commander of Naval Special Warfare Group Two, which manages all Virginia-based Navy SEAL teams. "We extend our condolences, thoughts and prayers to the family, friends, and NSW community during this time of grieving." □

of the shooting rampage in Newtown, Connecticut, and told her he was devastated that people thought he was capable of such an act.

"He said, 'All these babies, Mom. Who would do that? How could people think I would do that?'" Jessie Chavez said.

An assistant principal at Bartlesville High School notified police on Dec. 13 after a student said Sammie Chavez "tried to recruit other students to assist him with carrying out a plan to lure students into the school auditorium where he planned to begin shooting them after chaining the doors shut," Bartlesville police Lt. Kevin Ickleberry wrote in an affidavit.

"He also told them that he would place bombs by the doors so when the police arrived he would detonate the bombs, killing police as they entered the building," Ickleberry wrote.

Police later seized a rifle from his home in Bartlesville, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Tulsa.

Jessie Chavez said her son might have gone too far with the thought of retaliating for what he perceived as people talking about him, but she said she is certain that he never intended to follow through.

"I don't say that just because I'm his mother but because of all the experiences we've had," she said. "Nobody knows Sammie like I do." □

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# Memorial service for Sen. Inouye held in Hawaii

**BECKY BOHRER  
Associated Press**

**HONOLULU (AP)** — The late Sen. Daniel Inouye was remembered Sunday as an American hero whose legacy as a war veteran and longtime senator would be felt across Hawaii for years to come.

The memorial service at Honolulu's National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific was attended by about 1,000 people, including President Barack Obama, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Hawaii's congressional delegation and a number of other senators, cabinet secretaries and dignitaries.

"Daniel was the best senator among us all," Reid told those assembled, adding later: "Whenever we needed a noble man to lean on, we turned to Sen. Dan Inouye. He was fearless."

The cemetery, a strikingly beautiful site located in an

extinct volcano, is the final resting place for thousands of World War II veterans.



**President Barack Obama, center right, comforts Irene Hirano Inouye, visits with the widow of the late Sen. Daniel Inouye, right, as first lady Michelle Obama embraces Inouye's son, Daniel Ken Inouye, Jr., left, during a memorial service for the late senator at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012, in Honolulu.**

(AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)

More than 400 members of the storied Japanese-American 442nd Regimental

Combat Team — of which Inouye was a part — are buried at the site.

Adm. Samuel Locklear, commander of the Navy's U.S. Pacific Command, said this also will be Inouye's final resting place.

"We have lost an irreplaceable American," he said. Several 442nd veterans attended the Sunday morning service, the latest in a number of tributes and honors for Inouye following the 88-year-old's Dec. 17 death from respiratory complications.

Buses that brought people to the service flashed the words "MAHALO Senator Daniel K. Inouye" — using the Hawaiian word for "thank you."

A 19-gun cannon salute was fired as Inouye's coffin arrived at the cemetery. The service also featured a flyover by F-22 military jets

and the playing of "Taps" by Democratic Sen. Jon Tester of Montana.

Inouye's widow, Irene, who was seated with the president and first lady Michelle Obama in the front row, dabbed her eyes as a band of bagpipes and drums band played "Danny Boy."

Inouye was the first Japanese-American elected to both houses of Congress and the second-longest serving senator in U.S. history, at 50 years.

He was a high school senior in Honolulu on Dec. 7, 1941, when he watched dozens of Japanese planes fly toward Pearl Harbor and other Oahu military bases to begin a bombing raid that changed the course of world events. □

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## Italy's Monti says open to leading next government

FRANCES D'EMILIO

Associated Press

**ROME (AP)** — After keeping Italians, and the rest of Europe, in suspense for weeks, caretaker Premier Mario Monti on Sunday ruled out campaigning in February elections, but said he would consider leading the next government if politicians who share his focus on reform request it.

The decision positions him to take the helm again without having to get into the political nitty-gritty of an election — preserving his image as someone above the fray who can make tough decisions on imposing austerity. His previous measures have boosted confidence in Italy's finances, and fellow European leaders have made no secret they want to keep them in place.

Silvio Berlusconi, the scandal-tainted ex-premier considering another run, commented scathingly on Monti's openness to another term.

"I had a nightmare — still having a government with Monti," the media mogul said in an interview on state TV. He has said

in the past that he would run again if Monti did not, but made no commitment Sunday about his own political future.



**Italian Premier Mario Monti touches his head as he speaks during a news conference in Rome, Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012. Italy's caretaker Premier Mario Monti says he won't run in February elections, but if some political parties which back his anti-crisis agenda ask him to head the next government, he would "evaluate the offer." Monti ruled out heading any ticket himself, saying "I have no sympathy for 'personal' parties."**

(AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

Monti, who after his resignation Friday is continuing in a caretaker role, ruled out heading any ticket — even a center-right grouping that Berlusconi said he would be willing to back.

But the 69-year-old economist made it clear he was willing to take another turn in power.

"If one or more political forces is credibly backing (my) agenda or even has a better one, I'd evaluate the offer," Monti said during a news conference.

"To those forces who demonstrate convincing and credible adherence to the Monti agenda, I am ready to give my appreciation, encouragement, and if requested, leadership, and I am ready to assume, one day, if the

circumstances require it, the responsibility that would be entrusted to me by Parliament."

Monti refused to head any ticket himself, saying "I have no sympathy for 'personal' parties."

Italy is struggling to shore up its finances and emerge from recession, a challenge made harder by its volatile politics. The country has had dozens of governments over the years that let tax evasion spread, avoided unpopular reforms like raising the retirement age, and allowed public spending to balloon. Monti was appointed in November 2011 to head a non-elected government with the goal of saving Italy from a Greece-style debt debacle after financial markets lost faith in his populist predecessor, Berlusconi. □

## Syrian airstrike hits headline as envoy visits

BEN HUBBARD

Associated Press

**BEIRUT (AP)** — A government airstrike on a bakery in a rebel-held town in central Syria killed more than 60 people on Sunday, activists said, casting a pall over a visit by the international envoy charged with negotiating an end to the country's civil war.

The strike on the town of Halfaya left scattered bodies and debris up and down a street, and more than a dozen dead and wounded were trapped in tangled heap of dirt and rubble.

The attack appeared to be the government response to a newly announced rebel offensive seeking to drive the Syrian army from a constellation of towns and village north of the central city of Hama. Halfaya was

the first of the area's towns to be "liberated" by rebel fighters, and activists saw Sunday's attack as pay-back.

"Halfaya was the first and biggest victory in the

Hama countryside," said Hama activist Mousab Alhamadee via Skype. "That's why the regime is punishing them in this way." The total death toll remained unclear, but



**Syrian Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi speaks during a press conference in Damascus, Syria, Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012. Al-Zoubi said, the Syrian government's line that it is fighting terrorist groups backed by foreign powers who seek to destroy Syria, he equated the rebels with al-Qaida and denied that they had taken over any territory and said the government was willing to engage in dialogue but said the other side wasn't.**

(AP Photo/SANA)

the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said more than 60 people were killed. That number is expected to rise, it said, because some 50 of those wounded in the strike are in critical condition.

Amateur videos posted online Sunday showed residents and armed rebels rushing to the scene. One stopped to cover a mound of human flesh lying in the street with his coat.

More than a dozen dead or seriously wounded people lay in the street near a simple, concrete building, some in puddles of blood. Near its front wall, bodies jutted from a pile of dirt and rubble on the sidewalk.

Rebels screamed in distress while trying to extract the bodies, while others carried away the wounded.

It was unclear from the videos if the building was indeed a bakery. □

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## Egypt opposition alleges vote fraud in referendum

**SARAH EL DEEB**  
**Associated Press**

**CAIRO (AP)** — Egypt's opposition said Sunday it will keep fighting the Islamist-backed constitution after the Muslim Brotherhood, the main group backing the charter, claimed it passed with a 64 percent "yes" vote in a referendum.

The opposition alleged vote fraud and demanded an investigation — a sign that the referendum will not end the turmoil that has roiled this country for nearly two years since the uprising that ousted authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak. Many Egyptians, especially the tens of millions who live in extreme poverty, had hoped the new constitution might usher in a period of more stabil-



**Egyptian journalists tape their mouths and raise their pens during a demonstration against the draft constitution in Cairo, Egypt, Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012.**

(AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

ity. A heated political debate over the past month leading up to the referendum at times erupted into deadly street battles. There were no mass opposition

demonstrations on Sunday after the unofficial results came out.

Renewed violence and political tensions have further imperiled Egypt's already

precarious economy, reeling from dwindling resources and a cash-strapped government whose plans to borrow from the International Monetary Fund had to be pushed back because of the turmoil.

The finance ministry said Sunday the budget deficit reached \$13 billion in the five months from July-November, about 4.5 percent higher compared to the same period last year.

Official results of the referendum are not expected until Monday. If the unofficial numbers are confirmed, it will be a victory Islamist President Moham-

med Morsi, who is from the Brotherhood.

But the opposition allegations look likely to prolong the fight. Beyond allegations of fraud, the opposition will likely challenge new laws issued on the basis of the constitution as well as Morsi's economic policies.

"The referendum is not the end game. It is only a battle in this long struggle for the future of Egypt," said the National Salvation Front, the main opposition group. "We will not allow a change to the identity of Egypt or the return of the age of tyranny." □

## 4 police killed in Mexico ambush

**MORELIA, Mexico (AP)** — Prosecutors in the western Mexico state of Michoacan say gunmen have killed four local policemen and wounded five others in an ambush.

Police traveling in two pickup trucks had gone to a rural area to check out reports of a traffic accident when the gunmen opened fire.

The state prosecutor's office says the five wounded officers suffered serious injuries in the pre-dawn attack on Sunday.

There was no immediate information on the identity of the attackers, but Michoacan has long been plagued by drug gang violence. The state is home to the Knights Templar drug car-

tel, and local officials and police who run afoul of the gang have often been attacked. □

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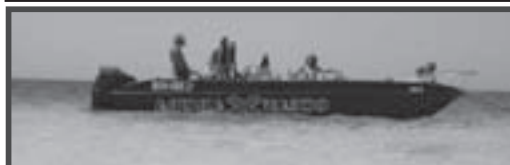
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# In Afghan Taliban birthplace, US troops step back

PATRICK QUINN

Associated Press

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE PASAB, Afghanistan (AP)**

— President Barak Obama will decide in the coming weeks how many American troops to send home from Afghanistan next year. A major factor in his decision will be the question of how successful U.S. troops have been in preparing the Afghans to secure their country at bases like this one, located in one of the country's most violent areas — the birthplace of the Taliban.

There have been calls in Congress for Obama to increase the size of a planned drawdown of U.S. forces before the end of summer 2013, when the Afghan military is supposed to take the lead in security across the country. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, as well, has suggested he wants the drawdown accelerated.

"We are working to make this transition of security happen sooner. We want all the foreign forces to come out of the villages and go to their bases so the Afghan forces can carry out security," Karzai said last week.

But too large a pullout too soon could undermine the fight against the Taliban insurgency if Afghan forces are not fully prepared. It is widely thought that Gen. John Allen, the top military commander in Afghanistan, and his senior staff want to keep a large force in place for the summer fighting season, before



**Afghan National Army recruits practice a house clearing during training exercise in Kabul, Afghanistan. U.S. soldiers serving in one of southern Afghanistan's most violent areas say they are successfully training the Afghans to secure their country and their progress so far will play a large role in determining how many more American troops President Barack Obama sends home next year.**

international forces move into an entirely back-up and training role behind the Afghan forces by the start of autumn — an event known as "Milestone 13."

Obama is expected to decide on the size of the

withdrawal after meeting with Karzai in Washington in early January. Their talks will also be key on determining what the U.S. military's role will be in Afghanistan after December 2014, when the foreign combat mission is set to end and almost all international troops are scheduled to leave. The U.S. currently has 66,000

thousand troops in Afghanistan out of an international force totaling about 102,000.

The work of training Afghan army units being done at this dusty base in the Zhari district of Kanda-

har province and at other bases scattered around the country will help shape Obama's decision.

U.S. and Afghan officers here say the district is a success story: Violence has not gone up more than two months after the American presence here was brought down from around 3,500 troops to around 300, with Afghan forces taking the lead in more areas.

But the situation remains tenuous. Residents say Taliban fighters remain in control of large parts of the district. Zhari is where Taliban leader Mullah Omar was born, where he founded the movement that ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s and has battled U.S. and Afghan forces for the past 11 years. Three years ago, Taliban forces controlled the district, and it has been one of the three most violent areas of Kandahar, the province that is the Taliban's traditional heartland. U.S. soldiers had a hard fight in Zhari when they moved into the south in large force as part of the surge in American troops early in the Obama administration. The district has rich farmland that produces pomegranates and

grapes used for raisins, and the fields, covered in dirt mounds, formed natural trenches the Taliban could fight from. Food, which was abundant, was easily coerced by the Taliban from villagers. Lt. Col. Tim Davis, commander of Combined Task Force Buffalo, said, "the density of mines was impressive" when his task force arrived and that it required "an entire combat operation just to put a road in." The commander of international forces in Kandahar and three other southern provinces, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Robert Abrams, told reporters recently that progress in Zhari had been "astounding." Afghan forces are already in the lead of security duties in many parts of the district, he said. Across the south, the Afghans carry out 400 to 500 daily patrols without coalition assistance.

Afghan military officers in Zhari contend they can now handle the fight without much help from the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force.

The U.S. military plans to repeat that process elsewhere in the south and east by creating 400 such teams. □

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## Venezuela VP: Chavez condition is stabilizing

**C. TOOTHAKER**  
**Associated Press**  
**Venezuelan VP strikes optimistic tone on Chavez**  
**CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)** — Venezuelan Vice President Nicolas Maduro is striking an optimistic tone for the second day in a row on President Hugo Chavez's recovery from cancer surgery in Cuba. Maduro says Chavez is "consolidating a recovery process, which fills us with joy." He spoke Sunday evening while visiting a pediatric hospital in Venezuela. A day earlier, Maduro said he had received an update from a ruling party member who visited Chavez in Cuba and that the Venezuelan leader's "condition is becoming increasingly stable." Chavez underwent surgery Dec. 11, about two months after being elected to another six-year presidential term. It was his fourth cancer-related operation since June 2011. Bolivian President Evo Morales traveled to Cuba on Sunday morning but there was no word on whether he visited his close ally Chavez.

Maduro said ruling party member Cilia Flores gave him the update on Chavez's recovery upon her return from the communist-led island. "Each day that passes, his recovery is more stable and he's receiving the best treatment," Maduro told a crowd of government supporters in Yaracuy state. Chavez underwent surgery Dec. 11, about two months after being elected to another six-year presidential term. It was his fourth cancer-related operation since June 2011. Complications following the latest surgery and Chavez's silence since the procedure have thrown into doubt whether he will be able to return to Venezuela for his Jan. 10 inauguration. National Assembly President Diosdado Cabello said earlier Saturday that ruling party lawmakers, who hold a majority in the legislature, won't call a new presidential election if Chavez can't return from Cuba in time for the swearing-in ceremony. "That's not going to happen," he said. □

*India:*

## Demonstrators, police clash at rape protest

**GARDINER HARRIS**  
**HARI KUMAR**  
**© 2012 New York Times**  
**NEW DELHI** — Thousands of protesters streamed into

damaged, and the police eventually used tear gas, water cannons and sticks to disperse the crowd. Officials said 35 protesters



**An Indian man overwhelmed by tear smoke lies on the ground during a violent protest in New Delhi, India, Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012.**

(AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)




the heart of New Delhi on Saturday to demand justice and better policing in the wake of the brutal rape of a 23-year-old medical student. Protesters scuffled with the police throughout the day. Some police vehicles were

and 37 police officers had been injured, two officers seriously, and that six buses and several police vehicles were damaged. Outrage over the crime has continued to build across the country and the protesters in New Delhi

promised to return in even greater numbers Sunday, prompting Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde to hold a news conference on Saturday night to plead for calm. "The government is committed to ensuring the safety of women in the capital as well as in the rest of the country," Shinde said. "I appeal to this media, to all those who have come to support this dedication, to withdraw." Shinde listed four steps the government would take immediately to improve security in New Delhi: increase the number of buses at night, track those buses with GPS devices, ensure drivers carry identity badges and increase the number of police officers on busy routes. The police have arrested six suspects. Shinde said that the victim had given a statement to a magistrate on Friday night, and that the government had enough evidence to prosecute the suspects. □

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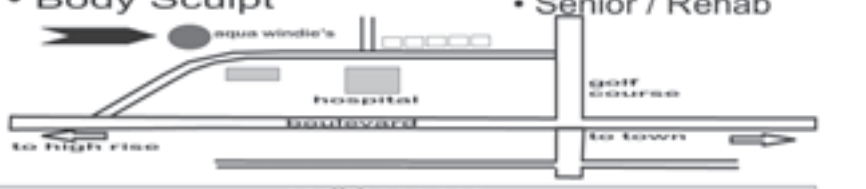
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# Ho Ho Holy Discount: Vatican tax-free store busy

**NICOLE WINFIELD**

**Associated Press**

**VATICAN CITY (AP)** — Anyone left on your Christmas list just aching for a 65-inch Samsung 3D flat-screen television? Just your luck. The Vatican's duty-free department store has one on sale for €2,899 (\$3,840) — a nifty savings over the €3,799 (\$5,032) it costs at Italy's main electronics chain Euronics. Or how about some new luggage for the holidays? The Vatican shop stocks a variety of Samsonite Cordoba Duo carry-ons for €123, a nice markdown from the €135 on the Samsonite website. But if a last-minute shopping splurge is in order, the Vatican can also oblige: Take this leather-bound travelling trunk from Florence's "The Bridge" leatherworks, with its five drawers, plaid interior, six wooden hangers and shiny brass buckles. At €5,900, it comes with a matching leather golf club bag, just what every monsignor needs under his Christmas tree.

There's a little-known open secret in the Vatican gardens, a few paces behind St. Peter's Basilica and tucked inside the Vatican's old train station: a sprawling, three-story tax-free department store that rivals any airport duty free or military PX, stocking everything from Church's custom grade shoes (€483 a pair) to Baume et Mercier watches (ladies €1,585, men's Capeland €5,000). There's a hitch, however. It's not open to the public, only to Vatican citizens, employees and their dependents, diplomats accredited to the Holy



**This is a 1962 photo showing train carriages inside St. Peter's train station in the Vatican, whose tracks connect to Italy's rail system. There's a little-known open secret in the Vatican gardens, a few paces behind St. Peter's Basilica and tucked inside the Vatican's converted train station: a sprawling, two-story tax-free department store that rivals any airport duty free store!**

(AP Photo)

See and (unofficially) their lucky friends who, after stocking up on holiday must-haves, proceed to the checkout with their Vatican connection and the ID card that entitles them to shop there. Few people outside Rome know the department store exists — there's no evidence of it on any Vatican website, no photos of its wares, no advertising outside the Vatican walls. Those who do know it exists seem to want to pre-

tend it doesn't since the high-end luxury items on sale aren't necessarily in tune with either the sobriety or the salaries of the Vatican rank-and-file. In fact, on a recent Thursday morning, nary a collar nor religious habit was in sight as ordinary lay folk milled around the spacious store during December's "extraordinary opening hours" — extended to accommodate bargain-hunting Christmas shoppers who were rewarded with a wine tasting

in the central atrium and piles of Brooks Brothers non-iron shirts and Burberry backpacks to choose from. "More than the prices, it's the material," said Luciano, a bulky Roman, who refused to give his last name as he shopped for an overcoat with his wife and an obliging Vatican friend waiting at checkout. "This one I don't like — I look like a priest," he muttered as he put the navy blue trench coat back on a hangar.

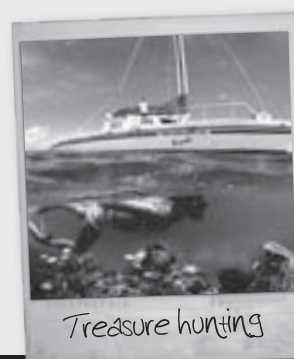
Cardinal Edmund Szoka, the American who sought to bring some order into the Vatican's finances as head of the Vatican city state, is credited with having made the department store what it is today, moving it into the Vatican's underused train station, a miniature version of Washington's Union station with a sweeping double staircase and glass-front window that frames the dome of St. Peter's a few meters (yards) away. Szoka said he moved it from the basement of the Vatican government building to the train station for more space, since the station wasn't used anymore for passengers and provided the perfect, airy open space that a shop of its kind would require. Szoka retired in 2006, well before the global economic crisis hit. The current leadership of the "Governorato" as the city state administration is called, recently asked all department heads to come up with cost-saving or profit-making initiatives to help the Vatican get through the tough times.

"Any good administrator wants to save what can be saved," said Monsignor Giuseppe Sciacca, the governorato's No. 2. "It seems obvious, necessary." While Sciacca is only too pleased to see the Vatican saving money where it can be saved and making it where it can be made, he was adamant that there are no plans to expand the customer base of the Vatican's little-known discount stores. Accords with Italy don't allow it. "We shouldn't. And we can't," he said. □

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*At the Radisson Aruba Resort Spa & Casino*

## Laguna Restaurant reopens with fresh new look!



**PALM BEACH** - Laguna restaurant, Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa invited press members to experience its freshly renovated look on Thursday, over Prime Rib Royal, with the signature of Executive Chef Kien Fat Lie Kwie, clearly present in every delicious bite! The themed buffets served on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday include an impressive fresh salad bar, iced shrimp, Mediterranean antipasto, hot dishes, a great selection of sides, imported cheeses

and home-made desserts, served in a refreshed dining room or on the terrace overlooking the famed tropical garden and lazy river. Thursday's Prime Rib, and Yorkshire pudding - a tasty puff, pop-over - were hand-carved and served au Jus, with horseradish cream and béarnaise sauces, as options. Dynamic director of restaurants Sheldon Leuden and recently welcomed Director of Food & Beverage Mark Naber were on hand to greet over



two dozen media personalities who gave the buffet raving reviews! Check out the Asian Adventure on Wednesday, the Seafood Festival on Friday, and It's Grillin' Time on Saturday. Consult the newspaper for the Christmas schedule: A Seafood Grill Extravaganza tonight, Christmas Brunch buffet on Tuesday, then Christmas Dinner Buffet in the evening of the 25th, and Boxing Day Brunch on Wednesday! □



## Aruba's expanded iStore now open!

**PONTON** -- Local entrepreneur Milo Croes Jr. first opened a small iStore in last year, and managed to grow rapidly, to a mega store, also successfully evolving from an Apple Au-

iStore was completed in record time, Croes Jr. explains, and the facility was beautifully designed by his son Jouel, of Croes Architecture Studio N.V.

The new space is almost four

The high-tech looking store with simple architecture, large glass panes and skylights, is a reflection's of the Apple philosophy marrying function with contemporary aesthetics. Equipped with a state of the art security system, and graced with ample parking, the store will be expecting clients 9am to 6pm, and in December, the iStore will be open on Sunday from 10am to 12noon. The new store was originally announced at an Apple Summit in the Dominican Republic, when Milo J. Croes was invited to that special gathering joining 27 of Apple's regional partners. Croes shares that as Aruba's Apple Outright Service Provider he was selected to attend the Apple Specialist Program and took advantage of the important meeting to surprise his colleagues with the great news from Aruba.

Apple fans and die-hards can't wait to see the new selection of ingenious Apple designed and created iPods, Mac laptops and desktop computers, the OS X operating system and Mountain Lion available as well as the revolutionary New iPad. Other high-end



thorized Reseller to an Apple Specialist and an Apple Authorized Service Provider. The opening of the new iStore at the original address, Ponton 67B, unit 5, was honored by Milo Croes Sr. considered the Father of Aruba's Carnival. We value older people, Milo Jr. explained, as he watched his father Milo Sr. cut the ribbon.

The construction for the

times bigger, and spreads over two floors, carrying the complete Apple product line, including desktops, portables, laptops, iPods, iPads and accessories. The store boasts a Genius Bar, an inventory room, and an educational center where clients may learn how to use the technology, and familiarize themselves with its amazing range of capabilities.



brands will also be available including Beats by Dr Dre, Belkin Electronics, Griffin Technology, and Harman Kardon designed to please music lovers.

The iStore interviewed over 30 candidates for employment, out of which ten were chosen all technology savvy kids, ages 15 to 19, who will be helping clients at the store with their purchases and set-ups.

For more information contact the iStore Aruba, Tel: 5882167 email: info@isto-

rearuba.com, Owner/Director: Milo J. Croes and family.

The iStore in Aruba is not like any other store. Usually Apple INC owns and operates the famous concept stores, careful about handing out licenses to individuals from far-away places. But Milo Croes Jr. managed to convince the Apple INC officials that he is a worthy entrepreneur, and that by itself is a big deal, how he dared to dream and triumphed. □

## Caribbean Palm Village: Cedric Tromp honored!



**NOORD** - Cedric Tromp, a member of the maintenance department at the Caribbean Palm Village Resort has been with the company for the past five years. Having graduated the local vocational school at the age of 18 with good knowledge of construction and carpentry he joined the resort and has since enjoyed working with his colleagues and interacting with guests.

This week, as Cedric celebrated his anniversary he was honored for his commitment by his department head Theo van Loon and interim General Manager Astrid Muller.

When asked, Cedric shares that while he hopes to be promoted within the department, he certainly plans to celebrate his 10th anniversary, still at the same resort. As he is still single, and living at home, he likes playing softball and working on fixing and restyling cars when off duty, making the most out of both work, and leisure.

Pictured here Cedric honored for his long-term commitment to Caribbean Palm Village Resort. □

**Beauty On The Beach**

*Carolina Machado*

She is from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. She is living in Caracas Venezuela right now. She and her family are staying at Holiday Inn Sunspree Beach Resort.

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# The Amsterdam Manor Resort Celebrates the Holidays!

**PALM BEACH** – The hard-working associates at Amsterdam Manor returned to one of their most-favorite eatery on the island, Amazonia Churrascaria, to celebrate the upcoming holidays. The group enjoyed a fantastic night at the Brazilian Rodizio restaurant, eating, drinking and enjoying each other's company. Amsterdam Manor is a boutique hotel located on Eagle Beach, a pioneer in the area of conservation on the island. The decorated resort earned many accolades this year and it couldn't have made it without the steadfast support of dedicated associ-



ates. Photos show the Amsterdam Manor crew enjoying the celebration held in their honor at Amazonia Churrascaria, occupying the entire main dining room. □



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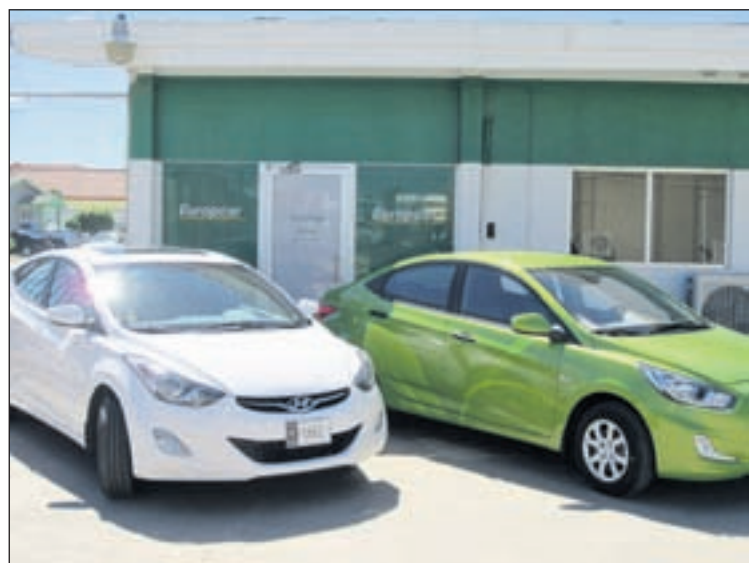
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# Economy Car Rental Changes Name to Europcar



**ORANJESTAD, Aruba** - Economy Car Rental announced that it has changed its name to Europcar effective immediately. At the same time, the company unveiled a new identity and Web site, [www.europcar-aruba.com](http://www.europcar-aruba.com). Europcar is the world's leading 'leisure car rental' company with designs on becoming the top rental agency in Aruba, with more than 200 available autos and offices at the airport and hotels. The company has recently rolled out its new fleet of seventy 2013 Hyundais, offering clients a choice from Accents, J10s, J80s Elantras and Tucsons. In January 1992, George Manning Jr. and his wife, Bernadette Manning, started Economy Car Rental with just 10 cars. The company's focus throughout its history has been: Satisfied customers are at the top of our list.



With this philosophy Economy grew into a major competitor on the island. During its two decade existence, Economy Car Rental has provided first class service with new cars [up to a maximum of 2 years in service] while providing lower rates than the other franchises. The company's ownership and people have not changed, the name has and the product is continu-

ously upgrading and getting better\_ new cars: the average age of our cars is six months and we inspect & clean every car after each rental. In addition to the favorable daily rates Europcar now offers flexible long term rates for corporations and individuals as well. For additional email us at [info@europcar-aruba.com](mailto:info@europcar-aruba.com) or call us at (297) 583-0200/ (297)582-9290[fax].



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In this 2007 file photo, Ryan Freel of the Cincinnati Reds poses for a photo in Sarasota, Fla.

Associated Press

## Ex-MLB player Freel found dead in Florida home

JENNIFER KAY

Associated Press

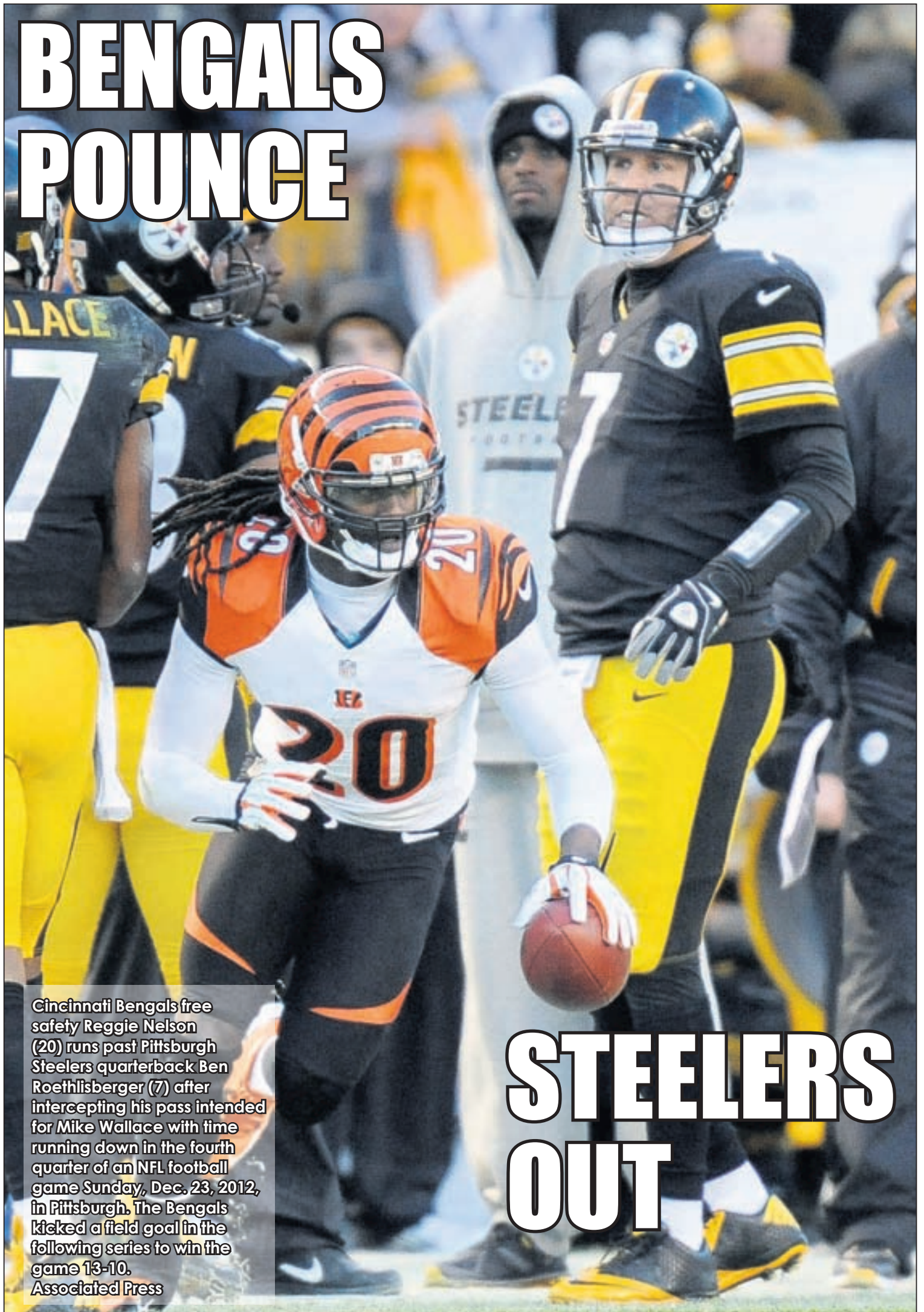
**MIAMI (AP)** -- Ryan Freel, a former Major League Baseball player known for his fearless play but whose career was cut short after eight seasons by a series of head and other injuries, was found dead Saturday in Jacksonville, Fla., according to the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Freel, who was 36, died of what appeared to be a self-inflicted shotgun wound, sheriff's office spokesman Shannon Hartley wrote in an email Sunday. The medical examiner will make the final determination of the cause of death.

"RIP Ryan Freel!! Great teammate, great guy, n loved his family!" former Cincinnati Reds teammate Sean Casey tweeted. "Such a sad day today with his passing! Awful news! Prayers are with his family!" The speedy Freel spent six of his eight big league seasons with the Reds and finished his career in 2009 with a .268 average and 143 steals.

Continued on Page 18

# BENGALS POUNCE



Cincinnati Bengals free safety Reggie Nelson (20) runs past Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger (7) after intercepting his pass intended for Mike Wallace with time running down in the fourth quarter of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012, in Pittsburgh. The Bengals kicked a field goal in the following series to win the game 13-10.  
Associated Press

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## Freel

Continued from page 17

"Really hurt by his passing!" Reds second baseman Brandon Phillips said on Twitter. "You'll never will be forgotten."

Freel drew attention in 2006 when he was quoted by the Dayton Daily News as saying he had an imaginary friend, Farney. "He's a little guy who lives in my head who talks to me and I talk to him," Freel was quoted as saying. "Everybody thinks I talk to myself, so I tell 'em I'm talking to Farney."

The Jacksonville native thrilled fans with his all-out style, yet it took a toll on his career.

During his playing days, he once estimated he had sustained up to 10 concussions. Freel missed 30 games in 2007 after a collision with a teammate caused a concussion.



In this June 12, 2006, photo, Cincinnati Reds third baseman Ryan Freel waits for the pitch during a baseball game with the Milwaukee Brewers in Cincinnati.

Associated Press

Freel showed no fear as he ran into walls, hurtled into the seats and crashed into other players trying to make catches.

His jarring, diving grabs of

reels, and he was praised by those he played with and against for always having a dirt-stained uniform.

Selected by the Toronto Blue Jays in the 10th round of the 1995 amateur draft

out of Tallahassee Community College, Freel made his big league debut in April 2001 with the Blue Jays after second baseman Homer Bush injured a thumb.

Freel appeared in just nine major league games that season, became a free agent and spent all of 2002 at Tampa Bay's Triple-A farm team. He signed a minor league deal with the Reds that November and made it back to the majors the following April.

He stayed with the Reds through 2008, when a torn tendon in his right hamstring caused him to miss the final 103 games of the season. He was traded to Baltimore at that December's winter meetings and split the 2009 season among the Orioles, Chicago Cubs and Kansas City Royals.

"The Reds family is deeply saddened to hear of the death of Ryan Freel," the Cincinnati Reds said in a statement.

"His teammates and our fans loved him for how hard he played the game, and he loved giving back to the community.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends."

Freel had consecutive seasons of 37, 36 and 37 steals from 2004-06 but started to slow the following year. After hitting .271 with eight homers and 27 RBIs in 2006, he gained a \$2,325,000 salary for the following year and then in April 2007 signed a \$7 million, two-year deal covering 2008 and '09.

He was in center field when he collided with right fielder Norris Hopper's elbow on May 28, 2007, an injury that caused Freel to be taken off the field in an ambulance.

Freel sustained a concussion that caused headaches and an impaired memory, and he didn't return until early July. □

# Adamek outpoints Cunningham in split decision

The Associated Press

**BETHLEHEM, Pa. (AP)** -- Tomasz Adamek, his nose swollen and eyes circled with a little purple, seemed satisfied and relieved after he outpointed Steve Cunningham in a split decision Saturday in their IBF heavyweight title eliminator at the Sands Bethlehem Events Center.

Adamek (48-2) received winning scores of 115-112 from judge Debra Barnes and 116-112 from Dave Greer, while Tom Miller scored it 115-113 for Cunningham (25-5). After six rounds, Miller and Greer had the fight even, and Barnes had Adamek up by two rounds. Greer and Miller gave Adamek three of the last four rounds.

"That was like sparring. Not very many punches were thrown. I feel like I can go back into the ring and fight again," said Adamek, who fought for the 11th time as a heavyweight, after spending most of his career at light heavyweight. "The

fight was close, my trainer told me I had to go after him after the eighth round, and I felt he ran against me. It was part of the plan to come on late in the last 20 seconds of each round. In a few rounds, I tried to attack him, and he would run. He ran. I fought. It's why I won."

The fight was a rematch of a 2008 cruiserweight bout that Adamek also won. Cunningham got up from knockdowns three times in the first fight. But that time, Adamek weighed 198 to Cunningham's 197. This time, Adamek weighed in at 223, and Cunningham 203 1/2.

Cunningham outlanded Adamek in total punches, 209-169, and used an effective jab, landing 129 of 349. But Adamek hit Cunningham with more power punches, 120-80.

"It all depends on what you were looking at," said Adamek's trainer, Roger Bloodworth. "If you looked at effective punching, which is what

the judges saw, they would have give this to Tomasz. If you liked running and being a stylist, then you wanted Cunningham. I think the more effective puncher won this fight, and that was Tomasz."

Still, Cunningham was baffled.

"I really don't know what more I can do. What can I say? What can I do? Real men cry, real men shed tears," Cunningham said. "You can't knock everyone out. We did our thing in the ring. It saddens me. I can't be getting cheated like this. It's sad, man, it's sad. It's nonsense. What needs to be done in boxing for this not to happen again? This isn't a game. What else do I have to do?"

Adamek advanced to fight contender Kubrat Pulev, with the winner scheduled to take on IBF beltholder and recognized world champion Wladimir Klitschko. □





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## AP source: Swisher, Tribe reach \$56M, 4-year deal



**New York Yankees' Nick Swisher celebrates their 14-2 win over the Boston Red Sox in a baseball game, Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2012, in New York. The Yankees clinched the American League East title.**

Associated Press

**By TOM WITHERS**  
**AP Sports Writer**

**CLEVELAND (AP)** -- The Indians' pitch to bring Nick Swisher "home" worked.

Two people familiar with the negotiations said Swisher has agreed to a \$56 million, four-year contract with the Indians, who used the free agent outfielder's deep Ohio connections to convince him to join the club. The people spoke on condition of anonymity Sunday because Swisher must take a physical before the deal can be finalized. The Indians are expected to announce Swisher's signing after Christmas, one of the people said.

The Indians will not comment until Swisher completes his physical. "Wow! What a crazy few weeks," Swisher said on Twitter. "Hey Cleveland! Are you ready? Because I'm coming home!"

Swisher's deal includes a \$14 million option for 2017 that could become guaranteed based on plate appearances the previous year. Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis was excited about the club's newest addition.

"Welcome to the Tribe (at) nickswisher, pumped to get ya," Kipnis tweeted.

The 32-year-old Swisher spent the last four seasons with the New York Yankees, taking advantage of the short right-field porch at Yankee Stadium. A switch-hitter, Swisher hit .272 this season with 24 homers and 93 RBIs.

Swisher will fill an outfield hole for the Indians, who traded Shin-Soo Choo to Cincinnati. Swisher will play right, with recently acquired Drew Stubbs likely taking over in center with Michael Brantley shifting from center to left field.

Swisher, who was born in Columbus and played at Ohio State, visited the Indians earlier in the week. The club used Swisher's ties with the Buckeyes to convince him to join a team that won just 68 games last season following an historic collapse in August.

During his tour of Progressive Field, Swisher watched a video presentation on the stadium's giant scoreboard that featured messages from current Ohio State football coach Urban Meyer and basketball coach

Thad Matta, who urged him to sign with the Indians. Later, Swisher and his wife, actress JoAnna Garcia, had lunch with former Ohio State coach Jim Tressel, who was at the school when Swisher played there. Swisher's signing is a significant win for the Indians, who have been in the market for an outfielder throughout the offseason.

During the winter meetings in Nashville, Tenn., they offered Shane Victorino a \$44 million, four-year contract before he agreed to a \$39 million, three-year deal with Boston.

Seattle, Texas and Boston were believed to be interested in Swisher, an All-Star in 2010 who was regarded as the second-best free agent hitter this offseason

behind Josh Hamilton. The Indians have been desperate to add power and Swisher, who has hit at least 22 homers in each of the past seven seasons, will bolster the middle of new manager Terry Francona's lineup.

Swisher's value may have been damaged by several poor postseasons with the Yankees. □

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## NFL Capsules

# RG3 leads Redskins over Eagles 27-20

The Associated Press  
PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Counted out by their own coach six weeks ago, the Washington Redskins and Robert Griffin III are on the brink of their first division title in 13 years.

Griffin threw a pair of touchdown passes in his first game back from a knee injury, Kai Forbath set the NFL record for consecutive field goals to begin a career, and the Redskins held on to beat the Philadelphia Eagles 27-20 on Sunday for their sixth straight win.

Nick Foles drove the Eagles to the Washington 5 before his intentional grounding penalty ended the game. The Redskins (9-6) can clinch the NFC East with a victory over Dallas at home next Sunday. They haven't won it since 1999 and last reached the playoffs in 2007. Trying to play spoiler, the Eagles (4-11) fell short in what could've been Andy Reid's last game coaching the team at home. Reid is unlikely to return to Philadelphia for his 15th season

next year.

SAINTS 34, COWBOYS 31, OT ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Garrett Hartley kicked a 20-yard field goal in overtime, and New Orleans damaged Dallas' playoff hopes. Drew Brees threw for 446 yards and three touchdowns and led a drive to the winning kick. The Saints lucked out before the winning kick when a fumble by Marques Colston rolled forward about 20 yards to the Dallas 2. Jimmy Graham recovered.

The Cowboys lost despite rallying for two touchdowns in the final 3:35 of regulation. Tony Romo, who threw for 416 yards and four scores, hit Miles Austin for the tying touchdown with 15 seconds left in regulation. The playoff hopes for the Saints (7-8) ended with Minnesota's win against Houston. The Cowboys (8-7) lost control of their playoff fate.

COLTS 20, CHIEFS 13 KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Andrew Luck threw for 205 yards to break the single-



Washington Redskins' Josh Morgan, top left, and Santana Moss celebrate as Philadelphia Eagles' Kurt Coleman looks down after Moss' touchdown reception in the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012, in Philadelphia. Associated Press

season rookie record, and his touchdown pass to Reggie Wayne late in the fourth quarter put Indianapolis in the playoffs.

Luck surpassed Cam Newton's year-old record of 4,051 yards passing by a rookie in the second quarter, and then came through in the closing minutes. He marched Indy to the Chiefs 7, then found Wayne in the back of the end zone on third-and-goal for the go-ahead score.

It was the seventh time Luck has rallied his team to victory in the fourth quarter. Darius Butler returned an interception 32 yards for a TD in helping the Colts (10-5) join the 2008 Miami Dolphins as the only NFL teams to win at least 10 games after losing 14 or more the previous season. The Chiefs are 2-13.

BENGALS 13, STEELERS 10 PITTSBURGH (AP) — Josh Brown kicked a 43-yard field goal with 4 seconds remaining to put Cincinnati in the playoffs and eliminate Pittsburgh from post-season contention.

Brown missed a 56-yarder earlier in the quarter, but earned a second chance when Reggie Nelson picked off Ben Roethlisberger and returned it to the Pittsburgh 46 with 14 seconds remaining. Andy Dalton hit A.J. Green for 21 yards on the next play, setting up Brown's game-winner to put the Bengals in the playoffs for consecutive years for the first times since 1981-82.

Dalton completed 24 of 41 for 278 yards and two interceptions for the Bengals (9-6), who snapped a five-game losing streak to Pittsburgh (7-8). □

## Luck sets rookie record, rookie PK sets NFL mark



Detroit Lions wide receiver Calvin Johnson and his father, Calvin Sr., walk off the field after the Lions' NFL football game against the Atlanta Falcons at Ford Field in Detroit, Saturday, Dec. 22, 2012. Associated Press

The Associated Press

Andrew Luck has broken the NFL rookie record for yards passing, and rookie kicker Blair Walsh has broken the league mark for 50-yard plus field goals in a season.

On a Sunday featuring a slew of records, Luck topped Cam Newton's year-old mark for yards passing in the first half of Indianapolis' game at Kansas City. Newton's record was 4,051 yards. Luck entered the game needing 74 yards to break the mark, and had 123 at halftime.

Minnesota's Walsh kicked a 56-yard field goal in the second quarter against Houston, giving him a record ninth field goal of 50 yards or more.

Also, Redskins kicker Kai Forbath set the NFL record for consecutive field goals to begin a career with 17 straight. He had field goals of 45 and 42 yards in the first half against the Eagles. New Orleans' Garrett Hartley had 16 straight. On Saturday, Detroit's Calvin Johnson broke Jerry Rice's single-season yards receiving record, and is at 1,892 with a game left. □





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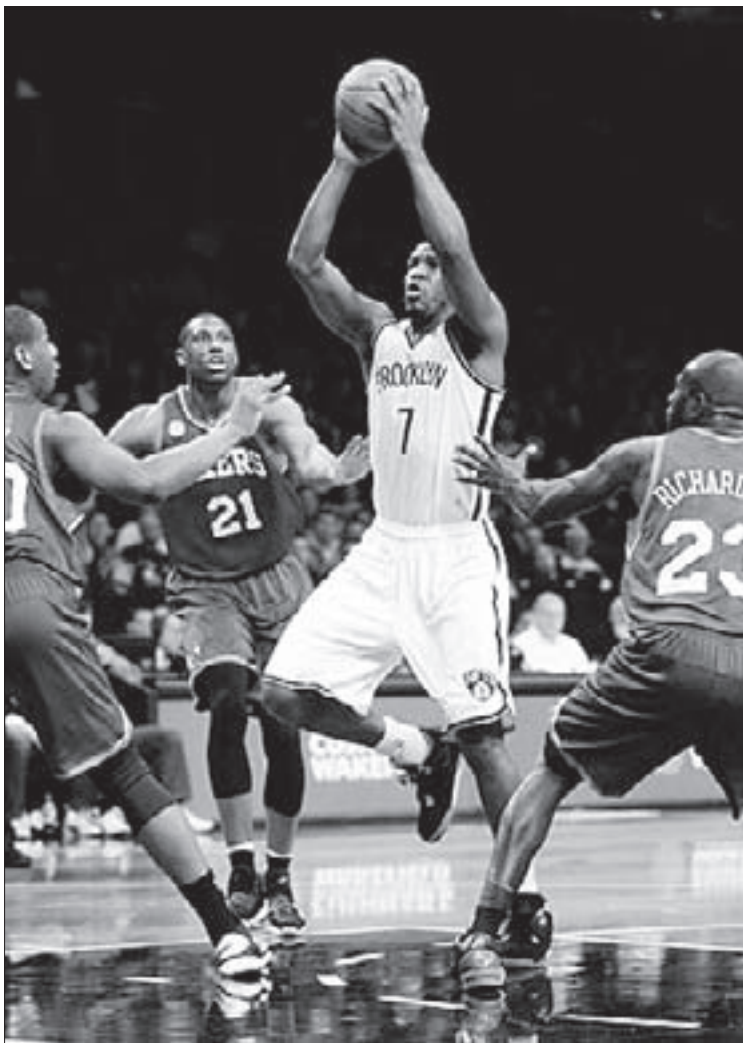
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# Johnson scores 22 points, Nets beat 76ers



Brooklyn Nets' Joe Johnson, center, takes the ball to the basket through Philadelphia 76ers defenders during the first half of an NBA basketball game at the Barclays Center Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012 in New York.

Associated Press

### Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** -- Nets coach Avery Johnson used the previous three days to give his team some rest after Brooklyn dropped nine of its last ten games.

The Nets got in some practice time and Johnson's staff looked over recent game film, adding some new plays to an offense that has struggled this season.

It paid off Sunday against the Philadelphia 76ers.

Joe Johnson scored 22 points, including 10 in the third quarter, Gerald Wallace had 14 points, nine re-

bounds and six assists and the Nets held on to beat the 76ers 95-92.

Avery Johnson came away pleased with the performance after the Nets had coughed up leads in the second half during their recent stretch of loses.

"Very satisfied because you know that's been our Achilles heel," the coach said. "We still had some minor issues in there. For the most part we took care of the ball. We were so organized whenever there was a breakdown."

The Sixers rallied from eight points down in the final 40.5

seconds left, but Brooklyn didn't fold.

"We definitely needed it. We just needed to get back in the winning track, especially in our building. It was good for us tonight," said Deron Williams, who added 16 points to help the Nets end a six-game losing streak at home against Philadelphia.

"We put in a couple of new sets which were old sets that we ran the last couple of years, that we hadn't put in this year. It was a little more continuity. We just went over it and kind of worked on it and it was good for us tonight. We got some good looks out of it. We got to the back side of plays and got some open shots."

Jrue Holiday led Philadelphia with 21 points, nine assists and six rebounds, Thaddeus Young added 18 points and 10 rebounds, and Evan Turner had 15 points and seven rebounds. The 76ers, opening an eight-game trip, have dropped six of their last seven games.

"We got off to a good start, up 12-4. Brooklyn hit us with a 20-5 run which knocked us back and also Joe Johnson's close to the third quarter. I just spoke to our guys about finishing quarters and who is the most dangerous man on the floor," Sixers coach Doug Collins said.

"Those are mistakes you can't make when you're on the road. As long as I'm the coach, our guys are going to fight back. If they don't then they'd have to get another coach."

The game seemed out of reach for the Sixers when Williams made a layup with 40.5 seconds left to make it

91-83.

But Holiday drew a foul on Williams and hit one of two free throws to make it 91-84. Holiday then fouled Williams, but he missed both free throws and Holiday answered with a 3-pointer with 19.1 seconds left to cut it to 91-87.

After Turner's foul sent Joe Johnson to the line, the Nets guard hit the first free throw but missed the second, leaving Brooklyn ahead 92-87. Dorell Wright then made a 3-pointer with 9.6 seconds left to cut it to 92-90.

Williams was fouled again by Holiday and hit two free throws before Turner answered with a layup to

make it 94-92. Joe Johnson finished the scoring with a free throw.

"I thought we played today with a lot more intensity. I thought we had a lot more fun. We talked about it in practice the other day, had a great practice and it came over to the game," Joe Johnson said.

Philadelphia jumped out to a 12-4 lead before Avery Johnson called a 20-second timeout with 5:50 left in the first quarter. Brooklyn responded with an 18-0 run, turning an eight-point deficit into a 10-point lead the Nets wouldn't relinquish.

"They made shots and got going, so that was pretty much it," Turner said. □

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## Drugs aim to make several types of cancer self-destruct

By **GINA KOLATA**

For the first time ever, three pharmaceutical companies are poised to test whether new drugs can work against a wide range of cancers independently of where they originated — breast, prostate, liver, lung. The drugs go after an aberration involving a cancer gene fundamental to tumor growth. Many scientists see this as the beginning of a new genetic age in cancer research.

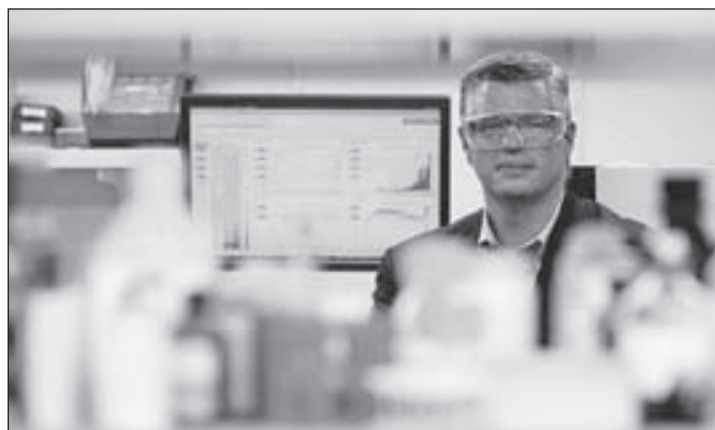
Great uncertainties remain, but such drugs could mean new treatments for rare, neglected cancers, as well as common ones. Merck, Roche and Sanofi are racing to develop their own versions of a drug they hope will restore a mechanism that normally makes badly damaged cells self-destruct and could potentially be used against half of all cancers.

No pharmaceutical company has ever conducted a major clinical trial of a drug in patients who have many different kinds of cancer, researchers and

federal regulators say. "This is a taste of the future in cancer drug development," said Dr. Otis Webb Brawley, the chief medical and scientific officer of the American Cancer Society. "I expect the organ from which the cancer came from will be less important in the future and the molecular target more important," he added.

And this has major implications for cancer philanthropy, experts say. Advocacy groups should shift from fund-raising for particular cancers to pushing for research aimed at many kinds of cancer at once, Dr. Brawley said. John Walter, the chief executive officer of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, concurred, saying that by pooling forces "our strength can be leveraged."

At the heart of this search for new cancer drugs are patients like Joe Bellino, who was a post office clerk until his cancer made him too sick to work. Seven years ago, he went into the hospital for hernia surgery,



**Dr. Donald Bergstrom is a cancer specialist at Sanofi, one of three companies working on a drug to restore a tendency of damaged cells to self-destruct.**

C.J. Gunther for The New York Times

only to learn he had liposarcoma, a rare cancer of fat cells. A large tumor was wrapped around a cord that connects the testicle to the abdomen. "I was shocked," he said in an interview this summer.

Companies have long ignored liposarcoma, seeing no market for drugs to treat a cancer that strikes so few. But it is ideal for testing Sanofi's drug because the tumors nearly always have the exact genetic problem the drug was meant to attack — a

fusion of two large proteins. If the drug works, it should bring these raging cancers to a halt. Then Sanofi would test the drug on a broad range of cancers with a similar genetic alteration. But if the drug fails against liposarcoma, Sanofi will reluctantly admit defeat.

"For us, this is a go/no-go situation," said Laurent Debussche, a Sanofi scientist who leads the company's research on the drug.

The genetic alteration the drug targets has tantalized

researchers for decades. Normal healthy cells have a mechanism that tells them to die if their DNA is too badly damaged to repair. Cancer cells have grotesquely damaged DNA, so ordinarily they would self-destruct. A protein known as p53 that Dr. Gary Gilliland of Merck calls the cell's angel of death normally sets things in motion. But cancer cells disable p53, either directly, with a mutation, or indirectly, by attaching the p53 protein to another cellular protein that blocks it. The dream of cancer researchers has long been to reanimate p53 in cancer cells so they will die on their own.

The p53 story began in earnest about 20 years ago. Excitement ran so high that, in 1993, Science magazine anointed it Molecule of the Year and put it on the cover. An editorial held out the possibility of "a cure of a terrible killer in the not too distant future."

Companies began chasing a drug to restore p53 in cells where it was disabled by mutations. But while scientists know how to block genes, they have not figured out how to add or restore them. Researchers tried gene therapy, adding good copies of the p53 gene to cancer cells. That did not work.

Then, instead of going after mutated p53 genes, they went after half of cancers that used the alternative route to disable p53, blocking it by attaching it to a protein known as MDM2. When the two proteins stick together, the p53 protein no longer functions. Maybe, researchers thought, they could find a molecule to wedge itself between the two proteins and pry them apart. □

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## Boeing engineers use spuds to improve in-air Wi-Fi

**JASON KEYSER**  
**Associated Press**

**CHICAGO (AP)** — If the wireless Internet connection during your holiday flight seems more reliable than it used to, you could have the humble potato to thank.

While major airlines offer in-flight Wi-Fi on many flights, the signal strength can be spotty. Airlines and aircraft makers have been striving to improve this with the growing use of wireless devices and the number of people who don't want to be disconnected, even 35,000 feet up.

Engineers at Chicago-based Boeing Co. used sacks of potatoes as stand-ins for passengers as they worked to eliminate weak spots in in-flight wireless signals.

They needed full planes to get accurate results during signal testing, but they couldn't ask people to sit motionless for days while data was gathered.

"That's where potatoes come into the picture," Boeing spokesman Adam Tischler said.

It turns out that potatoes — because of their water content and chemistry — absorb and reflect radio wave signals much the same way as the human body does, making them suitable substitutes for airline passengers.

"It's a testament to the ingenuity of these engineers. They didn't go in with potatoes as the plan," Tischler said.

Recapping the serendipitous path that led to better onboard wireless, Tischler said a member of the research team stumbled

across an article in the Journal of Food Science describing research in which 15 vegetables and fruits were evaluated for their dielectric properties, or the way they transmit electric force without conduction. Its conclusions led the Boeing researchers to wonder if potatoes might serve just as well as humans during their own signal testing. Despite some skepticism, they ended up buying 20,000 pounds of them.

Video and photos of the work, which started in 2006, show a decommissioned airplane loaded with row upon row of potato sacks that look like large, lumpy passengers. The sacks sit eerily still in the seats as the engineers collect data on the strength of wireless signals in various spots.

The Boeing engineers added some complicated statistical analysis and the result was a proprietary system for fine tuning Internet signals so they would be strong and reliable wherever a laptop was used on a plane.

Boeing says the system also ensures Wi-Fi signals won't interfere with the plane's sensitive navigation and communications equipment.

"From a safety standpoint, you want to know what the peak signals are, what's the strongest signal one of our communications and navigation systems might see from a laptop or 150 laptops or 350 laptops," Boeing engineer Dennis Lewis explains in a video.

In a nod to the humor in using a tuber to solve a high-tech problem, researchers dubbed the project

Synthetic Personnel Using Dialectic Substitution, or SPUDS.

The company says better Wi-Fi signals can be found already on three Boeing aircraft models flown by major airlines: 777, 747-8 and the 787 Dreamliner. □



This 2006 photo provided by Boeing Co. shows early dielectric substitution testing using potatoes in an airplane in Arizona.

Associated Press



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**ANNE D'INNOCENZIO**  
**MAE ANDERSON**  
**AP Retail Writers**

**ATLANTA (AP)** — Last-minute shoppers crowded into U.S. malls and stores during the last weekend before Christmas, but many didn't seem to be in the spending spirit.

This holiday season, Americans have a lot on their minds on top of the now familiar job worries.

Consumers in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, which account for 24 percent of retail sales nationwide, were tripped up by Superstorm Sandy. The storm hit in late October and disrupted businesses and households for several weeks.

Shoppers are also increasingly worried about the fast approaching "fiscal cliff" deadline — the possibility that a stalemate between Congress and the White House over the U.S. budget could trigger a series of tax increases and spending cuts starting Jan. 1. Confidence among U.S. consumers dropped to its lowest point in December since July because of



**Shoppers are seen at a mall in Salem, N.H., Friday, Dec. 21, 2012. Stores are counting on procrastinators for a final holiday sales boost.**  
**(AP Photo/Elise Amendola)**

growing concerns about the economy, according to a monthly index released Friday.

And the recent Newtown, Connecticut, school massacre also dampened shoppers' spirits, analysts said.

This confluence of factors has led to a muted approach to holiday shopping — bad news for retailers, which can make up to 40 percent of annual sales during November and December and were count-

ing on the last weekend before Christmas to make up for lost dollars earlier in the season. The Saturday before Christmas was expected to be the second biggest sales day behind the Friday after the Thanksgiving holiday in late November.

"It's so hard to put yourself in the mood," said Linda Fitzgerald, a 51-year-old nurse from Yonkers, New York, who was with her 17-month-old granddaughter at The Garden State Plaza in Paramus, New Jersey,

on Saturday. She was out Christmas shopping for the first time this year.

She planned to spend \$1,500 on gifts such as clothes for her boyfriend, down dramatically from \$4,000 last year. She had expected to start shopping last weekend, but simply didn't feel like it, facing a sister's cancer diagnosis and worry about the economy and the Connecticut shooting.

Similarly, Deborah O'Conner, 51, from Westwood, New Jersey, also at Garden State Plaza on Saturday, had intentions of finishing her holiday shopping early, but Superstorm Sandy put a wrench in her plans. She spent all last month helping out her parents and her cousin, whose Long Island, New York, homes suffered damage

"I had planned to be out early but it didn't happen," said O'Conner, the mother of three children, ages 22, 19 and 15. "If it weren't for the storm, I would have been done." Marshal Cohen, chief re-

search analyst at NPD Inc., a market research firm with a network of analysts at shopping centers around the U.S., estimates that customer traffic over the weekend was in line with the same time a year ago, but shoppers seem to be spending less.

"There was this absence of joy for the holiday," he said. "There was no Christmas spirit. There have been just too many distractions." After a strong Black Friday weekend, the four-day weekend that starts on Thanksgiving, when sales rose 2.7 percent, the lull that usually follows has been even more pronounced. Sales fell 4.3 percent for the week ended Dec. 15, according to the latest figures from ShopperTrak, which counts foot traffic and its own proprietary sales numbers from 40,000 retail outlets across the country. On Wednesday, ShopperTrak cut its forecast for holiday spending down to 2.5 percent growth to \$257.7 billion, from prior expectations of a 3.3 percent rise. □

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# If you're trying to stretch a budget, forgo the fowl!

ELIZABETH OLSON

© 2012 New York Times

Some festive, if quirky, expressions of true love hit a record this year.

The verses of the holiday classic "The 12 Days of Christmas" add up to 364 gifts, and if your true love bought them all, they would cost \$107,300, a 6.1 percent increase compared with last year's total. That is also more than double the giver's bill of nearly \$52,000 in 1995, the lowest annual total for the old-fashioned gifts and services.

The cost of the 12 days of cumulative gifts is calculated annually by PNC Wealth Management, part of the PNC Financial Services Group, to come up with an amusing and easily understandable explanation of how the country's economy is faring.

Instead of sticking to the pedestrian items like food, gasoline and electricity that make up the federal Consumer Price Index, PNC tracks the cost of the carol's more whimsical list, which ranges from a partridge to a group of leaping lords, to explain how prices affect the economy. This year, the prices of the six geese, seven swans and other fowl rose because the country's drought drove up the price of bird feed.

The five golden rings



An undated handout photo of the the Christmas Price Index, calculated by PNC Wealth Management. The prices of the six geese, seven swans and other winged creatures named in the holiday classic "The 12 Days of Christmas" rose because the country's drought increased the cost of bird feed.

(PNC via The New York Times)

named in the song's verses also cost significantly more than a year ago. Higher demand for gold stems from an improving economy, said James P. Dunigan, PNC Wealth Management's managing executive of investments, who oversees compilation of the index.

"The rise is larger than expected considering the modest economic growth we've had," he said. This year, buying just one of each gift enumerated in the song would cost \$25,431, a 4.8 percent increase over last year.

After nearly three decades of tracking prices, PNC

found that its final tabulation often mirrored the Consumer Price Index, which includes a much broader range of goods. It was up 1.87 percent for the 12 months that ended in November. The gap between the two indexes is caused in part by the price of feed but also to lower energy prices.

The six-figure outlay to accumulate all the gifts is unlikely to faze those with deep pockets, but there is still room for a holiday bargain with the milking maids, ladies dancing and leaping lords as well as with the calling birds, turtle doves and partridge. The eight

maids, who are considered unskilled labor, cost \$58, still a deal because the minimum wage remained at \$7.25 an hour.

Musicians like the 11 pipers and the 12 drummers were a bit more expensive, at \$2,562 and \$2,775. Each group received a 5.5 percent raise over last year, based on information from music groups and unions. The nine ladies dancing received no raise, remaining at \$6,294. Pushing up the final bill, however, were the geese, which soared by 29.6 percent, to \$210 each, up from \$162, as corn and other bird feed costs jumped.

The seven trumpeter swans could be found for \$7,000, up 11.1 percent.

Also up 11.8 percent was the cost of a pear tree, which rose \$20, to \$189.99, an increase that Dunigan said reflected a better housing market. In the song, the pear tree is a perch for the partridge, but in contemporary life, it is a tree often used in residential landscaping.

The gold rings this year rose

by 16.3 percent, to \$750 from \$645 last year. The three French hens totaled \$165, an increase of 10 percent from last year's \$150.

The partridge is the cheapest item, at \$15, and the swans, at \$1,000 each, are the most expensive.

The availability and price of swans greatly fluctuates every year, and each annual PNC list factors in the final gift total both with and without the swans.

Online shoppers will find assembling the parade of fowl and performers easier and more convenient, but shipping costs make the final bill much higher. The cost to give one set of items rises to \$40,440 when buying is done online.

To draw up the list, Dunigan said, PNC consulted sources like the National Aviary in Pittsburgh for bird prices, and organizations like the Pennsylvania Ballet Company in Philadelphia for the going rates paid to performers.

To arrive at the price of the 14-carat gold rings, PNC checked with a national jewelry retailer. □

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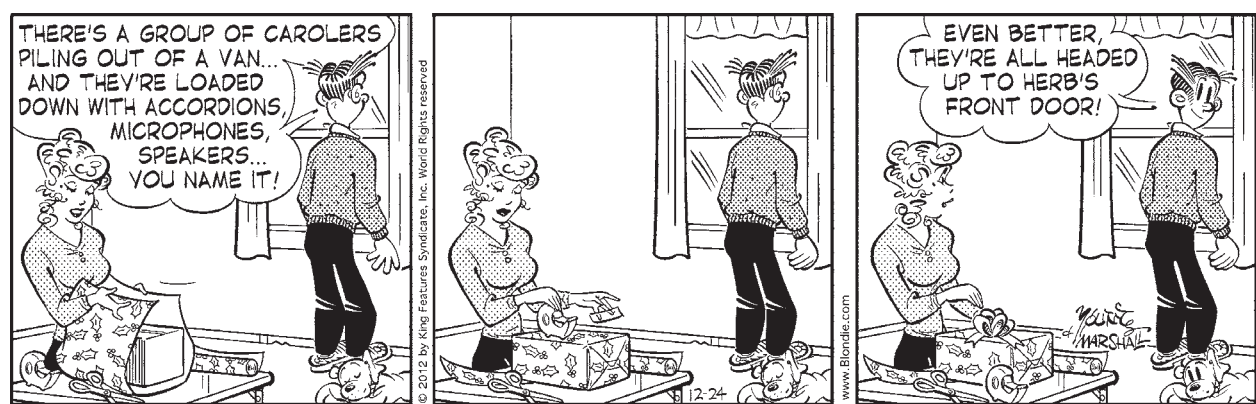
Mutts



6 Chix



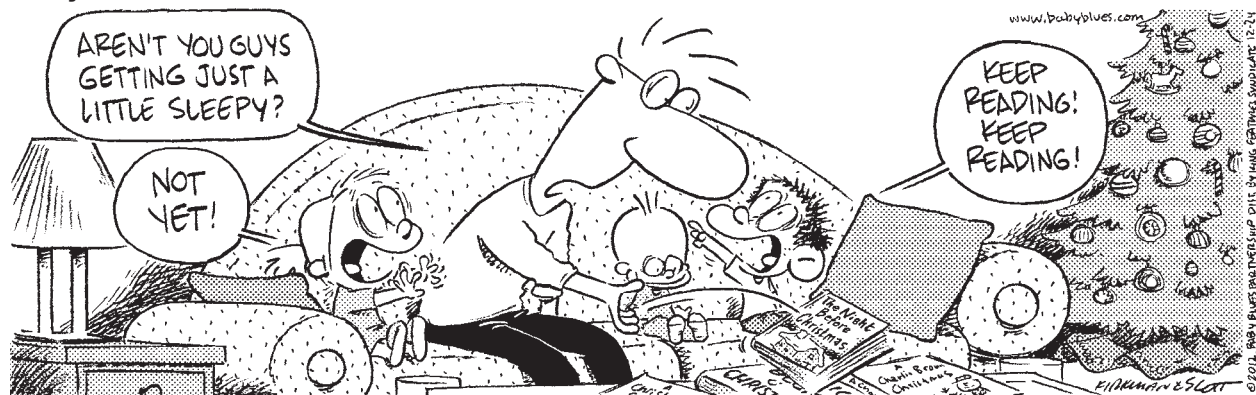
Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

9		4				3		2
	5						6	
1			7	4	3			8
		1	4		5	8		
		9		1		6		
		2	8		6	1		
6			1	3	2			4
	7						1	
2		8				9		3

Difficulty Level ★

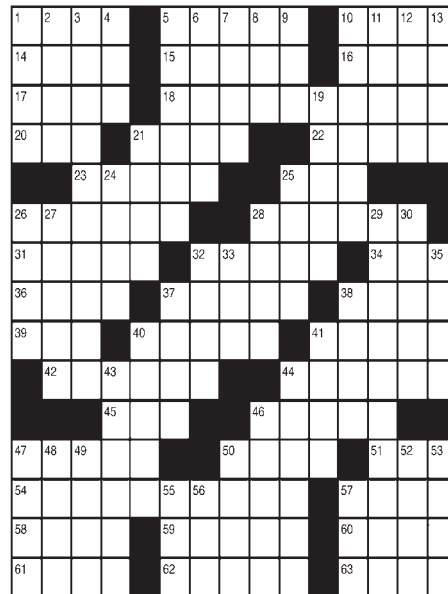
12/24

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

3	8	1	5	6	2	9	4	7
2	9	4	3	1	7	8	6	5
5	7	6	4	9	8	2	1	3
4	2	5	8	7	1	6	3	9
7	3	9	2	5	6	4	8	1
1	6	8	9	4	3	7	5	2
6	5	7	1	8	9	3	2	4
8	4	3	7	2	5	1	9	6
9	1	2	6	3	4	5	7	8

ACROSS

- 1 Wide shoulder band
- 5 Does not \_\_; is irrelevant
- 10 Longest river
- 14 Stack
- 15 Gigue
- 16 Huge continent
- 17 Eve's husband
- 18 Like a three-sided figure
- 20 \_\_ Diego, CA
- 21 Lass
- 22 Freeloaders; sponges
- 23 Loiter
- 25 Actress West
- 26 Red blood cell deficiency
- 28 Badger; torment
- 31 \_\_ pods; cocoa substitute
- 32 Kilt pattern
- 34 Lend a hand to
- 36 Cow comments
- 37 "Relax!"
- 38 Provide money for
- 39 Swift-running Australian bird
- 40 Hushed
- 41 Cuban dance
- 42 Emotional hang-ups
- 44 Girl's bow
- 45 Faux \_\_; social blunder
- 46 Mid-afternoon
- 47 Mantle
- 50 Dull-colored
- 51 Mai tai ingredient
- 54 Unspeakably awful
- 57 Grow weary
- 58 High cards
- 59 1/16 of a pound
- 60 National lang. of Australia
- 61 Prescribed amount
- 62 Famous
- 63 Elderly
- DOWN
- 1 Hot tubs
- 2 Verdi opera
- 3 Defamatory
- 4 Skirt's edge
- 5 Hun leader
- 6 Singer Como
- 7 Gramm or Donahue
- 8 Grassy area
- 9 Japan's dollar
- 10 Seasickness
- 11 \_\_ of Wight
- 12 Fib teller
- 13 Hearing organs
- 19 Sentry
- 21 Insincerely smooth
- 24 Minor prophet
- 25 Postal delivery
- 26 High point
- 27 Wynonna's mom
- 28 Stop
- 29 Walking leisurely
- 30 Croons
- 32 Sorority letters
- 33 Recline
- 35 June 6, 1944
- 37 Hints to actors
- 38 Golfer's cry
- 40 Tremor from inside the earth
- 41 Sidewalk edge
- 43 Meager; scanty
- 44 Ran after
- 46 Cease-fire
- 47 Actor Everett
- 48 Crazy
- 49 Miners' finds
- 50 "\_\_\_ worry; be happy"
- 52 Egg on
- 53 Blend together
- 55 Prefix for sense or fat
- 56 Twosome
- 57 Soothing drink



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/24/12

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

COLA	ABODE	CLAY
AXES	DINER	HOPE
MEAT	INTER	EVEN
ENRAGED	JOBLESS	
	YOU	PARIS
SHARP	FRY	DEALS
TAME	OBIT	LEAGUE
AIM	CLICHES	RAN
BRACED	KID	FEUD
SYNOD	BED	TRESS
	VALID	LEA
EMPEROR	TANGELO	
BEAR	ODDER	IRAN
BALE	KIOSK	LINE
SLED	SECTS	ENDS

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12/24/12



# Spain turns Christmas into a season of thrift

**RAPHAEL MINDER**

© 2012 New York Times

**MADRID** – This is the season when barren stone plazas and broad sidewalks here fill with Christmas markets peddling sweets, candles, holiday decorations and crafts. But alongside the festive stalls this year, another kind of market has sprung up in response to Spain's hard times. They are the "mercadillos," or little markets, where the entrepreneurial-minded have found a niche by gathering and selling the unsold stock of more established retailers whose sales have plummeted, or unwanted clothing and other items from people in need of cash. For the hard-pressed, the markets are a bargain hunters' paradise, and for the jobless, they offer an economic lifeline and a chance to recast their fortunes. Cristina Ar-  
esti and Sofia Bourne had never thought about working in fashion until they lost their jobs, joining the more than 25 percent of Spaniards who are unemployed. But this month they opened Abo Cool Market, a pop-up shop that sold secondhand women's clothing over six days inside a Madrid furniture store. The two women said they had intended to limit their sales to 500 items. But given the avalanche of offers from people wanting

to sell off their wardrobes, they ended up selecting 800 pieces of clothing, with a combined retail value of more than \$59,000.

"We just couldn't believe how many people now want to sell clothing that they had hardly worn," Bourne said.

On average, Spanish households are set to spend \$790 to \$920 on Christmas shopping this year, down as much as 38 percent from 2007, before the onset of the economic crisis, according to a study published this month by Esade, a Spanish business school. In Alcobendas, a warehouse was transformed into La Galeria del 32, a market that sold, among other things, wine, ham, sculpture, jewelry and handbags. Until about three years ago, the warehouse was used to store electronics equipment and other goods. "This kind of event is a great way for those who exhibit to attract more shoppers, while we earn something from renting the space rather than allowing it to stand empty," said Leticia Martinez Rubio, one of the organizers.

A charity foundation, the Fundacion Dar, also took part in the weekend event, encouraging shoppers to bring toys that the foundation would distribute to underprivileged children in the Madrid area. □

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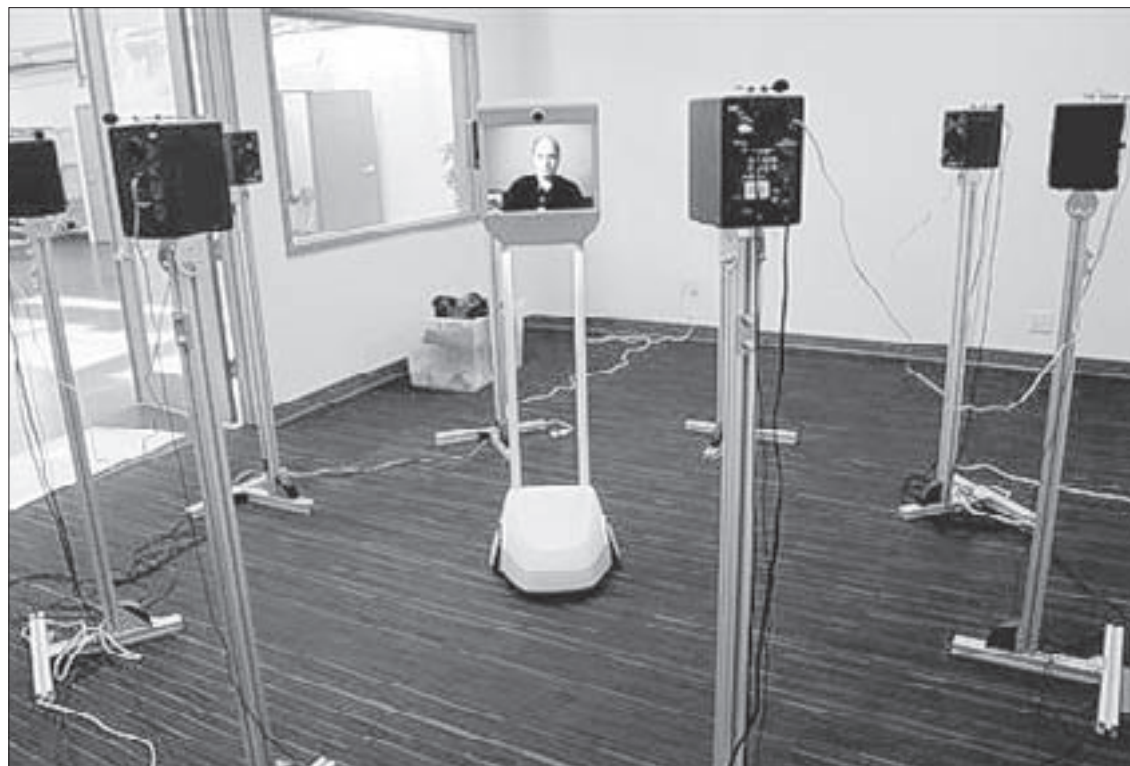
# Telepresence robots let employees 'beam' into work

**Associated Press**

**PALO ALTO, California (AP)**

— Engineer Dallas Goecker attends meetings, jokes with colleagues and roams the office building just like other employees at his company in Silicon Valley. But Goecker isn't in California. He's more than 2,300 miles away, working at home in Seymour, Indiana. It's all made possible by the Beam — a mobile video-conferencing machine that he can drive around his company's offices and workshops in Palo Alto. The five-foot-tall device, topped with a large video screen, gives him a physical presence that makes him and his colleagues feel like he's actually there.

"This gives you that casual interaction that you're used to at work," Goecker said, speaking on a Beam. "I'm sitting in my desk area with everybody else. I'm part of their conversations and their socializing." Suitable Technologies, which makes the Beam.



**Bo Preising, Suitable Technologies' vice president of engineering, seen on screen, tests the Beam remote presence system in a sound room in Palo Alto, Calif., Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2012.**

**Associated Press**

is now one of more than a dozen companies that sell so-called telepresence robots. These remote-controlled machines are equipped with video cameras, speakers, microphones and wheels that allow users to see, hear, talk and "walk" in faraway locations.

More and more employees are working remotely, thanks to computers, smartphones, email, instant messaging and video-conferencing. But those technologies are no substitute

for actually being in the office, where casual face-to-face conversations allow for easy collaboration and camaraderie.

Telepresence-robot makers are trying to bridge that gap with wheeled machines — controlled over wireless Internet connections — that give remote workers a physical presence in the workplace.

These robotic stand-ins are still a long way from going mainstream, with only a small number of organizations starting to use them.

The machines can be expensive, difficult to navigate or even get stuck if they venture into areas with poor Internet connectivity. Stairs can be lethal, and non-techie might find them too strange to use regularly.

"There are still a lot of questions, but I think the potential is really great," said Pamela Hinds, co-director of Stanford University's Center on Work, Technology, & Organization. "I don't think face-to-face is going away, but the question is, how much face-to-face can be replaced by this technology?"

Technology watchers say these machines — sometimes called remote presence devices — could be used for many purposes. They could let managers inspect overseas factories, salespeople greet store customers, family members check on elderly relatives or art lovers to tour foreign

museums.

Some physicians are already seeing patients in remote hospitals with the RP-VITA robot co-developed by Santa-Barbara, California,-based InTouch Health and iRobot, the Bedford, Massachusetts,-based maker of the Roomba vacuum.

The global market for telepresence robots is projected to reach \$13 billion by 2017, said Philip Solis, research director for emerging technologies at ABI Research.

The robots have attracted the attention of Russian venture capitalist Dmitry Grishin, who runs a \$25 million fund that invests in early-stage robotics companies. "It's difficult to predict how big it will be, but I definitely see a lot of opportunity," Grishin said. "Eventually it can be in each home and each office." His Grishin Robotics fund recently invested \$250,000 in a startup called Double Robotics. The Sunnyvale, California, company started selling a Segway-like device called the Double that holds an Apple iPad, which has a built-in video-conferencing system called FaceTime. The Double can be controlled remotely from an iPad or iPhone.

So far, Double Robotics has sold more than 800 units that cost \$1,999 each, said co-founder Mark DeVids. The Beam got its start as a side project at Willow Garage, a robotics company in Menlo Park where Goecker worked as an engineer. A few years ago, he moved back to his native Indiana to raise his family, but he found it difficult to collaborate with engineering colleagues using existing video-conferencing systems. □



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## Bethenny Frankel and husband of two years separating



In this March 17, 2011 file photo, reality TV personality Bethenny Frankel poses for a portrait in New York. Frankel released a statement Sunday, Dec. 23, 2012, announcing her and husband Jason Hoppy are separating. Associated Press

**SANDY COHEN**

**AP Entertainment Writer  
LOS ANGELES (AP)**

Bethenny Frankel and husband Jason Hoppy are separating. The 42-year-old TV personality, chef, author and entrepreneur told The Associ-

ated Press Sunday that the split brings her "great sadness."

"This was an extremely difficult decision that as a woman and a mother, I have to accept as the best choice for our family," Frankel said. □

## Rihanna donates \$1.75M to Barbados hospital



This Nov. 7, 2012 file photo shows singer Rihanna during the 2012 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in New York. Associated Press

**BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (AP)** — Pop star Rihanna has given \$1.75 million to a hospital in her Caribbean homeland of Barbados in memory of her late grandmother.

Rihanna says the donation to buy three pieces of medical equipment was her way "giving back to Barbados."

She made the comments during a Saturday ceremony with relatives at the island's Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The hospital's radiotherapy unit has been renamed the Clara Braithwaite Center for Oncology and Nuclear Medicine after Rihanna's grandmother, who died in June.

Rihanna recently released "Unapologetic," her seventh album in seven years. □

## Aruhiba Cigars, Aruba's only hand rolled cigars!

*t's a matter of prestige and quality...*



**ORANJESTAD-** Benjamin Petrocchi, a true native Aruban started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced hand rolled cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi always had a interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crops. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba, he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The whole process took him 10 years to perfect. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the moulding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. Their handmade cigar box is specially designed with their "Aruhiba" logo. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba as a promotion for Aruba through its fine cigars. The company sells Aruhiba to the international markets as well. Visit their retail store

located in front of the Historic Dutch Windmill in front of the Westin Resort, with any purchase of \$20 and up you receive a free "Aruhiba" cigar or ask for their gift box of 5 cigars get 1 FREE for only \$37. They open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am till 6:30 pm and on Sundays from 9 am to 1 pm. Aruhiba cigars are now available at the gift stores in your resort

and at well-known cigar stores. For their complete selection and attractive by the box prices visit their retail store. Tours are also available at their Tobacco farm where their cigars are grown and rolled.

For a group or private tour, call 586 0347 - 593 6177 or send them an email at [aruhibacigars@gmail.com](mailto:aruhibacigars@gmail.com)





# 'Hobbit' extends No. 1 journey with \$36.7 million

**DAVID GERMAIN**

**AP Movie Writer**

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Tiny hobbit Bilbo Baggins is running circles around some of the biggest names in Hollywood.

Peter Jackson's "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" took in \$36.7 million to remain No. 1 at the box office for the second-straight weekend, easily beating a rush of top-name holiday newcomers.

Part one of Jackson's prelude to his "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, the Warner Bros. release raised its domestic total to \$149.9 million after 10 days. The film added \$91 million overseas to bring its international total to \$284 million and its worldwide haul to \$434 million.

"The Hobbit" took a steep 57 percent drop from its domestic \$84.6 million opening weekend, but business was soft in general as many people skipped movies in favor of last-minute Christmas preparations.

"The real winner this weekend might be holiday shopping," said Paul Dergarabedian, an analyst for box-office tracker Hollywood.com.

Tom Cruise's action thriller "Jack Reacher" debuted in second-place with a modest \$15.6 million debut, according to studio estimates Sunday. Based on the Lee Child best-seller "One Shot," the Paramount Pictures release stars Cruise as a lone-wolf ex-military investigator tracking a sniper



This publicity file photo released by Warner Bros., shows the character Gollum, voiced by Andy Serkis, in a scene from the fantasy adventure "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey." Associated Press

conspiracy. Opening at No. 3 with \$12 million was Judd Apatow's marital comedy "This Is 40," a Universal Pictures film featuring Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann reprising their roles from the director's 2007 hit "Knocked Up."

Paramount's road-trip romp "The Guilt Trip," featuring "Knocked Up" star Seth Rogen and Barbra Streisand, debuted weakly at No. 6 with \$5.4 million over the weekend and \$7.4 million since it opened Wednesday. Playing in narrower release, Paramount's acrobatic fantasy "Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away" debuted at No. 11 with \$2.1 million.

A 3-D version of Disney's 2001 animated blockbuster "Monsters, Inc." also had a modest start at No. 7 with \$5 million over the weekend and \$6.5 million since opening Wednesday.

Domestic business was off for the first time in nearly two months. Overall revenues totaled \$112 million, down 12.6 percent from the same weekend last year, when Cruise's "Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol" debuted with \$29.6 million, according to Hollywood.com.

Cruise's "Jack Reacher" opened at barely half the level as "Ghost Protocol," but with a \$60 million budget, the new flick cost

about \$100 million less to make.

Starting on Christmas, Hollywood expects a big week of movie-going with schools out through New Year's Day and many adults taking time off. So Paramount and other studios are counting on strong business for films that started slowly this weekend.

"'Jack Reacher' will end up in a very good place. The movie will be profitable for Paramount," said Don Harris, the studio's head of distribution. "The first time I saw the movie I saw dollar signs. It certainly wasn't intended to be compared to a 'Mission: Impossible,' though." Likewise, Warner Bros. is looking for steady crowds for "The Hobbit" over the next week, despite the debut of two huge newcomers — the musical "Les Miserables" and the Quentin Tarantino action movie "Django Unchained" — on Christmas Day.

"We haven't reached the key holiday play time yet," said Dan Fellman, head of distribution for Warner. "It explodes on Tuesday and goes right through the end of the year."

In limited release, Kathryn Bigelow's Osama bin Laden manhunt saga "Zero Dark Thirty" played to packed houses with \$410,000 in just

five theaters, averaging a huge \$82,000 a cinema.

That compares to a \$4,654 average in 3,352 theaters for "Jack Reacher" and a \$4,130 average in 2,913 cinemas for "This Is 40." "The Guilt Trip" averaged \$2,217 in 2,431 locations, and "Monsters, Inc." averaged \$1,925 in 2,618 cinemas. Playing just one matinee and one evening show a day at 840 theaters, "Cirque du Soleil" averaged \$2,542.

Since opening Wednesday, "Zero Dark Thirty" has taken in \$639,000. Distributor Sony plans to expand the acclaimed film to nationwide release Jan. 11, amid film honors and nominations leading up to the Feb. 24 Academy Awards.

Opening in 15 theaters from Lionsgate banner Summit Entertainment, Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor's tsunami-survival drama "The Impossible" took in \$138,750 for an average of \$9,250.

A fourth new release from Paramount, "The Sopranos" creator David Chase's 1960s rock 'n' roll tale "Not Fade Away," debuted with \$19,000 in three theaters, averaging \$6,333.

Universal's "Les Miserables" got a head-start on its domestic release with a \$4.2 million debut in Japan.

## Reports: Rolling Stones guitarist Wood ties knot

**LONDON (AP)** — Two British newspapers say Rolling Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood has married his fiancée Sally Humphreys at a ceremony at London's Dorchester Hotel.

The Sun and the Daily Mirror carried photographs of the 65-year-old rocker with a pale boutonniere and a dark blue suit, and his 34-year-old bride in a traditional white gown and a clutch of matching white flowers.

The Sun quoted Wood as saying "I'm feeling great" as he and his bride kissed and posed for pictures outside the exclusive hotel in London's upscale Mayfair district.

The newspapers said the guests included singer Rod Stewart and his wife Penny Lancaster as well as ex-Beatle Paul McCartney and his wife Nancy Shevell.

A call and an email to Wood's U.S.-based agent weren't immediately returned.



Ronnie Wood and his new fiancée Sally Humphreys arrive for the British Fashion Awards at the Savoy Hotel in central London, Tuesday Nov. 27, 2012.

Associated Press



# Send in the clowns



Thomas L. Friedman

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When thinking about the state of the Republican Party, I defer to a point that the Democratic consultant James Carville made the other day: "When I hear people talking about the troubled state of today's Republican Party, it calls to mind something Lester Maddox said one time back when he was governor of Georgia. He said the problem with Georgia prisons was 'the quality of the inmates.' The problem with the Republican Party is the quality of the people who vote in their primaries and caucuses. Everybody says they need a better candidate, or they need a better message but – in my opinion – the Republicans have an inmate problem."

The political obsessions of the Republican base – from denying global warming to defending assault weapons to opposing any tax increases under any conditions, to resisting any immigration reform – are making it impossible to be a Republican moderate, said Carville. And without more Republican moderates, there is no way to strike the kind of centrist bargains that have been at the heart of American progress – that got us where we are and are essential for where we need to go. Republican politicians today have a choice: either change your base by educating and leading GOP voters back to the center-right from the far right, or start a new party that is more inclusive, focused on smaller but smarter government and market-based, fact-based solutions to our biggest problems. But if Republicans continue to be led around by, and live in fear of, a base that denies global warming after Hurricane Sandy and refuses to ban assault weapons after Sandy Hook – a base that would rather see every American's taxes rise than increase taxes on millionaires – the party has no future. It can't win with a base that is at war with math, physics, human biology, economics and common-sense gun laws all at the same time.

Do you know how troubled this party is? Two weeks ago, the former GOP Senate majority leader Bob Dole, a great American, went to the Senate floor in his wheelchair to show his support for Senate ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of People With Disabilities. Nevertheless, the bill failed to win the two-thirds needed for ratification, because only eight Republicans dared to join Democrats in support of the treaty, which was negotiated and signed by George W. Bush! It essentially requires other countries to improve to our level of protection for the disabled, without requiring us to change any laws. It

has already been ratified by 126 countries. But it failed in the Senate because Rick Santorum managed to convince the GOP base that the treaty would threaten U.S. "sovereignty." Santorum stopped just short of warning that space aliens would take over our country if we ratified the treaty.

Because they control the House, this radical Republican base is now holding us all back. President Barack Obama was moving to the center in these budget negotiations. He reduced his demand for higher tax revenues to \$1.2 trillion from \$1.6 trillion; he upped the level at which Americans who would be hit with higher taxes to those earning \$400,000 a year from \$250,000; and he made his own base holder by offering to cut long-term spending by lowering the inflation adjustment index for Social Security. It seemed that with a little more Republican compromise, Obama would have met them in the middle, and we could have had a grand bargain that would put the country on a sounder fiscal trajectory and signal to the markets, the world and ourselves that we can still do big hard things together. That will have to wait. Now the best hope is some mini-, crisis-averting, Band-Aid.

The GOP today needs its own DLC. The Democratic Leadership Council was founded by a group of Democratic governors and activists, led by Bill Clinton, in 1985 to lead the party back to the center from a failing leftward course that had resulted in it being repeatedly shut out of the presidency, except after Watergate. I asked Clinton's pollster, Stan Greenberg, what Republicans could learn from the Clinton/DLC experience.

"There is a lot of pain," said Greenberg. "You can't change the party without pain. You can't just make some head-fakes to Hispanics." The DLC, he noted, started by building an organization over 10 years and by running more centrist Democrats "in the primaries." It didn't just wait to pivot to the center in the general election. It fought for and educated the Democrat base in the primaries, by DLC candidates running in support of free trade, NAFTA and welfare reform. "With Clinton, we won the primaries in a way that defined us, so that he could run in the general election as the candidate of broad appeal."

That fractured the party and produced Ralph Nader, who cost Al Gore the 2000 election. But after losing that election, said Greenberg, the Democrats came together around a moderate-left core and did not engage "in dysfunctional primaries." Republicans need to go through a similar process of building new institutions and coalitions to support candidates who can move the party back to the center-right. Today, all their institutions, from think tanks to Fox News, "are reinforcing the trends that are marginalizing their party," said Greenberg. Unfortunately, we don't have a decade to wait for a GOP DLC. Some leaders in that party need to stand up for sane compromises right now. □



## Wish you a gun-free Christmas



Gail Collins

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Well, the Mayans were sort of right.

The world didn't implode when their calendar stopped on Dec. 21. But the National Rifle Association did call for putting guns in every American school in a press conference that had a sort of civilization-hits-a-dead-end feel to it.

And we learned that negotiations on averting a major economic crisis had come to a screeching halt because Speaker John Boehner lost the support of the far-right contingent of his already-pretty-damned-conservative caucus. We have seen the future, and everything involves negotiating with loony people.

Wayne LaPierre, the CEO of the NRA, has major sway in Congress when it comes to gun issues. So the press conference, in which he read a rambling, unyielding statement in a quavering voice, while refusing to take any questions, could not have inspired confidence that the national trauma over the shooting at a Connecticut elementary school was going to be resolved anytime soon.

LaPierre immediately identified the problem that led to a deranged young man mowing down children with a semi-automatic rifle: Gun-free school zones. ("They tell every insane killer in America that schools are

the safest place to inflict maximum mayhem.") Then he demanded a police officer in every American school. Or maybe a program to recruit armed volunteers.

At around the same time he was speaking, a gunman in Pennsylvania killed three people after shooting up a rural church. We will await the next grand plan for arming ministers.

The idea that having lots of guns around is the best protection against gun violence is a fairy tale that the NRA tells itself when it goes to sleep at night. But an armed security officer at Columbine High School was no help. And history also shows that armed civilians generally freeze up during mass shootings – for good reason, since usually the only way a crazed gunman gets stopped is when he runs out of ammunition. So what we continue to have is an excellent argument for banning weapons that spray lots of bullets.

However unhinged LaPierre might have seemed to the casual observer, he sent a clear message to members of Congress who fear the wrath of the NRA: No compromise on banning assault weapons or any gun control issue. That made it hard to imagine any reform getting past the great, gaping maw that is the House of Representatives.

We witnessed the magic of the House Republican majority when the Tea Party forces blocked Boehner's plan to continue the Bush tax cuts for incomes under \$1 million a year. This was around the time the speaker recited the prayer, much beloved by 12-step programs, about seeking the serenity to accept things you cannot change.

Boehner's bill was mainly a political ploy, so in a way, its defeat was meaningless. Except that it would be comforting not to believe that one of the critical players in Washington was always at the mercy of the loopy-extremist wing in his caucus.

Like, um, Rep. Tim Huelskamp of Kansas. On Friday, Huelskamp represented the House resistance forces on MSNBC's "Morning Joe," in an appearance with

great Mayan overtones. First, he gradually acknowledged that he was never going to vote for anything that raised taxes on anybody, even if it was understood by the entire world to be a negotiating tactic to win massive spending cuts and avert massive tax increases on 99.8 percent of the population.

Then the discussion turned to the Connecticut shootings, and Huelskamp quickly announced that the nation did not have a gun problem.

"It's a people problem. It's a culture problem," he insisted. Anybody who disagreed – like President Barack Obama – was, he said, using a tragedy "to push a political agenda."

In conclusion, the congressman announced that he had an 11-year-old son, "and I have a choice whether he's allowed to play those video games. What I would suggest to moms and dads across this country is look at what your children are doing. ... And I'm not saying to pass a single law about that, because I think that would be politicizing the issue."

Which we really hate. Politicizing. There are so many ways we'd rather be celebrating the holidays.

We would like to be gathering around the tree with loved ones, discussing current events in the form of that story about the theft of 6 million pounds of syrup from the strategic maple syrup reserve in Quebec.

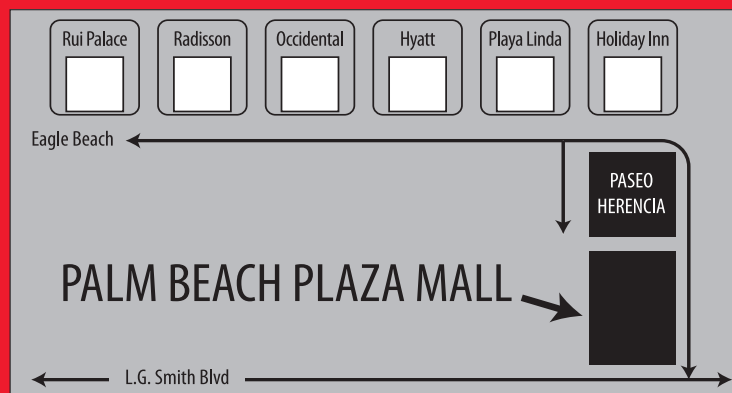
But we are where we are. Obama bid a Merry Christmas to the nation after announcing that he would try to re-avert the feared "fiscal cliff" with a bill that resolves virtually nothing but avoiding tax increases for the middle class.

"At the very least, let's agree right now on what we already agree on," he said. This is what currently passes for a wildly optimistic statement.

Meanwhile, a congressman from Wisconsin, angry about the failure to pass a farm bill, warned that the nation was about to fall over "the Dairy Cliff."

At least there's still eggnog. God bless us every one. □





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